

Hafa Adai!

Ex-BMV chief's co-defendant detained anew. **PAGE 2**
Outreach teaches about the types of plastics. **PAGE 3**



\$1

Saipan Tribune

THE CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER

Volume XXXIII, Issue No. 246

www.saipantribune.com

TUESDAY DECEMBER 12, 2023

www.facebook.com/saipantribune

DUE TO LACK OF FUNDS

Tinian Customs faces possible disconnection

By **FERDIE DE LA TORRE**
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The Tinian Customs Division may have its power cut on Jan. 8, 2024, as its parent agency, the Tinian Department of Finance, does not have the money to pay for utilities.

Tinian Department of Finance resident department head Milissa A. Mendiola informed Finance Secretary Tracy B. Norita in a letter dated Dec. 1, 2023, that she is seeking help with funding their

See TINIAN on Page 4

FERDIE DE LA TORRE

A photo of the Hafa Adai Welcome to Tinian sign on the island of Tinian.

DOC to launch the 10th Corrections academy

By **KIMBERLY B. ESMORES**
kimberly_esmores@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The Department of Corrections is set to launch the 10th Cycle of its Corrections academy next year.

DOC Commissioner Anthony Torres said

See DOC on Page 4



Torres



Wehlburg

New CUC TMO Wehlburg finds her job challenging

By **FERDIE DE LA TORRE**
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Rachel Wehlburg, the new technical manager for oil at the Commonwealth Utilities Corp., is enjoying the challenges of her job and the

people at CUC.

As CUC's TMO, Wehlburg oversees all the requirements of the U.S. District Court for the NMI's stipulated order No. 2, which is a federal order that focuses on

See CUC on Page 4

Rota Resort appeal of lease termination denied

By **FERDIE DE LA TORRE**
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The hearing office of the Department of Public Lands has denied Rota Resort & Country Club's appeal of DPL's termination of its lease agreement over approximately 150 hectares of public land on Rota.

Ramon S. Dela Cruz of DPL's Administrative Hearing Office, ruled in a decision

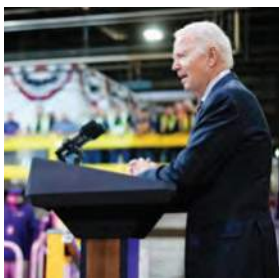
See ROTA on Page 4



FERDIE DE LA TORRE

The Rota Resort & Country Club on the island of Rota is seen in this file photo.

INSIDE



BUSINESS

President Joe Biden goes into next year's election with a vexing challenge: Just as the U.S. economy is getting stronger, people are still feeling horrible about it.

PAGE 11



NATION

President Joe Biden is taking a more active role in Senate negotiations over changes to the immigration system.

PAGE 12



WORLD

Battles raged across Gaza on Sunday as Israel indicated it was prepared to fight for months or longer to defeat the territory's Hamas rulers.

PAGE 13



SCAN ME WITH A COMPATIBLE QR READER TO KEEP UPDATED ON ALL THE LATEST NEWS.



GOT A NEWS TIP?

TEL: 235-6397 / 235-2440

FAX: 235-3740

EMAIL: editor@saipantribune.com

Local

Ex-BMV chief's co-defendant detained anew

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
kimberly_esmores@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The co-defendant of former Bureau of Motor Vehicles chief Juana Deleon Guerrero in the license fraud case, who is out in public pending his sentencing, has been detained anew after the U.S. District Court for the NMI revoked his pretrial release.

In an appearance last week before U.S. District Court for the NMI Chief Judge Ramona V. Manglona, Li Yongde, through his lawyer, Janet King, admitted to the allegations that he violated the conditions of his pretrial release. Those allegations, as reported by U.S. Probation officer David-Atalig, included driving a vehicle multiple times while on bail, even though the prohibition against driving was one of the conditions of Li's release.

In addition, Li lied in his reports to the U.S. Probation Office when he claimed he was never questioned nor arrested by law enforcement when in fact he was stopped multiple times on different traffic violations like driving without a



The U.S. District Court for the NMI in Gualo Rai.

KIMBERLY B. ESMORES

license, speeding, and others. Li was released on his own recognizance in March. At the revocation hearing, assistant U.S. Attorney Albert Flores recommended revocation of the pretrial release, while King recommended that Li remain released. After reviewing the U.S. Probation officer's report, Manglona granted the petition to revoke Li's release and ordered that he be remanded immediately to the custody of the U.S. Marshals while he awaits sentencing. Li, like Deleon Guerrero, will be sentenced this Friday, Dec. 15. While the prosecution has notified the court that it will recommend a sentence of 14 months for Li, King has requested that the court consider a 12-month sentence instead. According to Flores, who has served as the head prosecutor in this case, the government is recommending the high end of the sentencing guidelines for Li—which the government anticipates to be 14 months—because he was at the heart of the corrupt scheme to provide fraudulent licenses to illegal immigrants. "Defendant is at the very heart of the corruption scheme that has plagued the CNMI BMV for years. A well-known 'street broker,' defendant is the 'go-to' person for foreign nationals, typically citizens of the People's Republic of China, without lawful immigration status...who need a CNMI driver license," he said. Flores further argues that a 14-month sentence is warranted as Li used the relationships he formed with employees at BMV over the years, to include the BMV chief, to facilitate his scheme where he made upwards of \$1,700 for the unlawful production of driver licenses. "The rampant unlawful driver license scheme facilitated by defendant fostered an environment of systemic corruption at the CNMI BMV, and endangered public safety by arming unqualified drivers to operate vehicles on roadways. How the CNMI recovers from this corruption, regains trust of the BMV, and perhaps reconciles safety concerns pertaining to the number of persons operating motor vehicles who do not understand CNMI traffic laws is a grave question. We can only pray that one of the drivers operating a motor vehicle on the roadways of the CNMI because of defendant's fraudulent driver license scheme, does not cause an undeserved injury to an unsuspecting citizen or guest of the CNMI," he said. On the other hand, King argues that a 12-month sentence is justified because Li cooperated with the FBI, which led to the conviction of the BMV director, and that her client's cooperation also allowed for surveillance and other activities that uncovered other potentially criminally liable BMV employees. "The defendant was a part of the scheme, but he never could have produced a single CNMI driver's license without the employees and the BMV director. They were behind the BMV counter, creating and issuing the driver's licenses. Another critical factor that the court must consider is that the defendant continued to cooperate with the United States even after he [has already pleaded] guilty. ...It is not his fault if his information was already repeatedly provided to the FBI and nothing new is available to him to further their ongoing investigations," she said. King also insists that Deleon Guerrero and her employees ultimately fostered corruption, and Li was just a small part of that already existing corrupt system. "The people who received driver's licenses were without lawful immigration status, and it was not about whether they could drive safely on the roadways. However, none of these clarifications excuse or justify the crimes. He should be punished, and he accepts that a term of imprisonment will be his punishment, but when imposing the sentence in this matter, the court must punish the defendant with a sentence commensurate to the crimes and his culpability. The defendant's sentence of 12 months would not raise concerns of sentence disparity between other defendants with similar records with driver's license cases. This sentence would be appropriate considering the defendant's lack of a criminal history," she said. According to the unsealed information, from about Jan. 1, 2020, through about Dec. 20, 2022, on at least 50 occasions, Deleon Guerrero conspired with Li, or "Ivan," fellow BMV employees, residents of the CNMI without lawful immigration status, and others, to produce CNMI driver licenses for 10 individuals without valid and current legal immigration status.

THE KERWIN FROST BOX

PICK THIS

THIS IS MY BOX

OR THIS

THIS IS ME (KERWIN)

THESE ARE MY BUDDIES

Choice of Big Mac® or 10 pc. McNuggets®

Meal includes one collectible figurine. While supplies last. Figurine not sold separately. Some restrictions apply.

© 2023 McDonald's

Outreach teaches about the types of plastics

By **CHRYSTAL MARINO**
chrystal_marino@saipantribune.com
CORRESPONDENT

The Mariana Islands Nature Alliance joined with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife last Nov. 3 at the American Memorial Park in Garapan to demonstrate to students and volunteers the differences in plastics and how to recycle them correctly.

MINA outreach coordinator Joseph Nekaifes and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Mariana Trench Marine National Monument Park ranger Jihan Younis headlined the workshop, speaking about environmental thoughtfulness and how the community can contribute to reduce plastic waste.

Several volunteers and a

group from the Saipan Seventh Day Adventist School attended the event.

Nekaifes said the workshop that day was part of their new pilot project called "Community Recycles Plastic" program. Essentially, it aims to teach the public how to sort the different types of plastics "so that they can eventually do it at home."

Although there are dozens of types of plastics, they can be broken down into seven groups, Nekaifes said.

"On Saipan, we can recycle the Type 1, Type 2, Type 4 and the Type 5," he added.

Type 1 plastics are the clear part of water bottles while Type 2 are the plastics that make up the bottle cap. Five-gallon wa-



Mariana Islands Nature Alliance's Joseph Nekaifes shows students how to distinguish different plastics last Nov. 30 at the American Memorial Park in Garapan.

ter bottle caps are Type 5 plastics and laundry detergent bottles are Type 4.

Nekaifes said they can turn these plastics into key chain charms, mini decors, coast-

ers, fishing bobbers, bowls and more. They are also currently looking into how Type 1 plastics can be used as 3D printing filament.

"By recycling we can make more products," he said, as they aim to get more people knowledgeable on sorting for the eventual use of their 3-in-1 Upcycling Machine.

Younis explained that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's intention in being a part of this partnership "is for people to make the connection between our actions on land and its impact not only on the nearshore waters, but also in the deep sea. Our islands are closest to a deepsea feature like the Mariana

Trench, and we are already seeing trash ending up there."

In a 2016 NOAA deep exploration of the Marianas, very common debris items, like processed meat cans, beer cans, and plastics were spotted on the ocean floor, she said.

"In the clips and videos, you will see evidence of trash in the deep..." she said, "so we just want to try and make this distinction—that everything is connected and a little goes a long way with whatever actions you do on land."

Younis added that garbage is also impacting the CNMI's three northernmost islands: Asuncion, Maug, and Farallon de Pajaros.

2 sentenced to over 40 months in prison each

By **KIMBERLY B. ESMORES**
kimberly_esmores@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Two People's Republic of China nationals have been sentenced to over 40 months in prison for an attempt to smuggle methamphetamine or "ice" to the CNMI through the U.S. Postal Service.

U.S. District Court for the NMI Chief Judge Ramona V. Manglona imposed last week a 46-month and 70-month sentence respectively on Wang Yurong and Chun Yang, who have both pleaded guilty to possession with intent to distribute methamphetamine.

Wang, 50, was sentenced to 46 months incarceration, five years of supervised release following release, 100 hours of community service in lieu of a fine, and a \$100 special assessment fee.

After his release from prison, Wang will be deported from the CNMI.

Yang, 46, was sentenced to 70 months in prison, five years of supervised release after he gets out of prison, 100 hours of community service in lieu of a fine, and a \$100 special assessment fee.

Likewise, Yang will be deported upon his release from prison.

U.S. Attorney Shawn N. Anderson said in a statement that this case demonstrates the effectiveness of partnerships among Commonwealth and federal law enforcement.

"A substantial amount of methamphetamine was kept out of our communities. I applaud the efforts of all involved in bringing these defendants to justice. 'Operation Cloudy Day' was part of an Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force's investigation. OCDETF identifies, disrupts, and dismantles the highest-level drug traffick-

ers, money launderers, gangs, and transnational criminal organizations that threaten the United States by using a prosecutor-led, intelligence-driven, multi-agency approach that leverages the strengths of federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies against criminal networks," he said.

The CNMI Division of Customs and Biosecurity uncovered the smuggling attempt last June 21, 2022, after its agents discovered 1,809.80 grams of methamphetamine inside of a mail parcel during a routine inspection at the Saipan U.S. Post Office. The parcel was mailed from California. Upon discovery of the drugs, agents with the Drug Enforcement Administration joined the investigation.

The next day, DEA and the CNMI Department of Public Safety's Drug Enforcement Task Force monitored the parcel as it was claimed from the post office. The package went through exchanges between multiple persons and vehicles, and was ultimately delivered to Wang.

After receiving the package, Wang brought it to an apartment where she met Yang and Xing Rui Gao. They were promptly arrested after opening the package.

Gao was charged separately and pleaded guilty on Oct. 4, 2023. Sentencing is scheduled for Feb. 23, 2024. None of the defendants had lawful immigration status at the time of the offense.

This investigation was led by the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration with cooperation from the CNMI Customs and Biosecurity Agency, the CNMI DETF, and prosecuted by Albert S. Flores, Jr., assistant U.S. Attorney in the District of the Northern Mariana Islands.

Hafa Adai!
Saipan Tribune

Accepting Entries Now!

What I Wish for Christmas Drawing Contest

OPEN TO KIDS AGES 6 TO 12

Deadline of Submission:
December 19, 2023

Dimensions:
8.5in x 11in to 11in x 17in

Mediums:
Watercolor, Poster Color, Acrylic, Crayons & Color Pencils.
No computer generated artwork allowed.

Draw what you wish for Christmas and tell us why. Add a short description in your drawing as to what is your Christmas wish and why.

Artworks must be original and must be Christmas themed. Winners will get special gifts!

Please submit entries to Saipan Tribune
JP Center, Beach Road Garapan
M-F at 8am - 6:00pm.
For more information, please email sales@saipantribune.com or call (670) 235-2440 and look for Christine.





Resort manager faces assault allegations



CONGRATULATIONS

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO/

Congratulations to PV2 Codie Joseph Tan Escota, who graduated from the U.S. Army Basic Military Training on Nov. 22, 2023, at Fort Jackson in Columbia, South Carolina. Escota, who is the eldest son of Jerry and Wendie Escota, enlisted under the Guam Army National Guard as a Signal Support Systems Specialist.

By **KIMBERLY B. ESMORES**
kimberly_esmores@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Coral Ocean Resort manager Calvin Park is facing assault allegations following a civil complaint filed against him in Superior Court that accuses him of pushing a person to the ground.

Liana S. Hofschneider filed a civil complaint against Coral Ocean Resort and its manager, Park, last week, alleging assault and battery, intentional infliction of emotional distress, and negligence.

Hofschneider, represented by Anthony Aguon, said the incident actually happened two years ago, and that Park pushed her to the ground twice following a dispute about excavating a historical site.

Hofschneider is asking the court to grant her damages, attorney's fees, and other relief deemed appropriate by the court.

According to her complaint, Hofschneider said she and her husband, Richard Hofschneider, had visited Coral Ocean Beach behind Coral Ocean Resort last Dec. 4, 2021.

While there, the Hofschneiders noticed a heavy equipment vehicle with an excavator loaded in the back that was

parked along the coastline. Later, Liana Hofschneider said, the workers unloaded the excavator and appeared to begin excavating the ground.

Liana Hofschneider said they were concerned about earthmoving activities on a historic site and that the erosion would run off into the ocean from the earthmoving activities.

The lawsuit said that Richard Hofschneider approached the excavation site first to express his concern and verify whether the excavation was properly permitted.

The workers stopped digging the ground and responded that Coral Ocean Resort had the permits and that they would call the office to confirm. Richard Hofschneider thanked them and returned to his wife.

However, soon after, the Hofschneiders said, the equipment turned back on again and the workers resumed excavating.

The second time around, Liana Hofschneider herself went to the excavation site, expressed her concerns to the workers, and renewed the request to verify permitting for their earthmoving activities to which they stated that their manager had the permits at the Coral Ocean Resort office and that they would get a copy for her.

Hofschneider said that, as

she headed back to her husband, two employees wearing COR uniforms sped toward her in a golf cart, one of them being Park.

The complaint said Park identified himself as the person in charge of the area and the excavation and "aggressively harassed" Hofschneider by calling her names, dismissing her concerns, and threatening to call the police on her for inquiring about the excavation permits.

Park then called the police to report Hofschneider who also called the police to report the incident with Park.

When the police arrived, Hofschneider claimed Park cut them off before arriving to the pavilion she was at, spoke to the police, and then left without approaching the Hofschneiders.

After that, Liana Hofschneider said, the heavy equipment started back up again and as she was making her way to the operators again, she was stopped by Park who allegedly blocked her way and pushed her, causing her to lose her balance.

Hofschneider said Park pushed her a second time, which exacerbated a prior knee injury.

TINIAN

From page 1

prepaid utility meter account for the Customs Division for the duration of fiscal year 2024.

If the division's prepaid account meter is not loaded soon, this will serve as their formal notification to Norita's office that their utilities will be disconnected on or about Jan. 8, 2024.

If that happens, Mendiola said, they will have no choice but to limit their services to the community of Tinian until such time their immediate utility needs are addressed.

Mendiola described their funding situation on Tinian as an "urgent matter."

Mendiola noted that a provision of the fiscal year 2024 budget was vetoed by Gov. Arnold I. Palacios, leaving them with no resources to cover the cost of utilities.

Although there is flexibility for departments to use their revolving accounts, she said that Tinian Finance has no revolving account.

Additionally, Mendiola said, they were not given operating funds and have exhausted their only other option of personnel lapses.

Given that their department has exhausted all the means available to them, it leaves her no choice but to reach out to their "state counterparts" for assistance, she said.

ROTA

From page 1

issued last week that Rota Resort LLC's failure to make rental payments to DPL as required by the lease agreement was not excusable.

Dela Cruz also found that Rota Resort's failure to use the premises for 90 consecutive days—effectively abandoning the leased premises in violation of the lease agreement—was not excusable.

He determined that DPL's termination of the lease agreement was not arbitrary and capricious.

Dela Cruz dismissed Rota Resort LLC's appeal with prejudice, which means Rota Resort could not re-open its appeal to the administrative hearing office.

Rota Resort LLC has the option, though, to appeal the decision and order within 30 days of the date of receipt to the DPL Office of the Secretary, Dela Cruz said.

DPL said that based on its records, Resort Resort LLC owes DPL \$101,277 in lease and interest fees for the period beginning July 1, 2020 to Nov. 30, 2020.

DPL Secretary Teresita A. Santos, who was at the time the acting secretary, executed the DPL notice of termination and notices of violation last March 8.

Dela Cruz conducted an evidentiary hearing last Sept.

1 and 8. Colin M. Thompson appeared as counsel for Rota Resort LLC and its owner, Hee Kyun Cho. Assistant attorneys general Alison Nelson and Vina Seelam served as counsel for DPL.

Rota Resort LLC asserts that DPL's termination of the lease agreement was arbitrary and capricious and that a provision in the lease agreement excuses its obligation to make rental payments due to the occurrence of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In his ruling, Dela Cruz noted that Article 11 of the lease agreement is clearly intended to apply to the performance of discrete actions under the agreement such a construction or repairs for which a specific deadline has been set.

In addition, Dela Cruz said, Article 11 itself states that when a delay is caused by a *force majeure* event, the period of delay "shall be added to the period allowed herein for the completion of such work."

Force majeure refers to an unforeseeable circumstance that hinders a party from fulfilling its part in a contract.

Dela Cruz said that rental payment is not "original construction, repairs, [or] reconstruction" and that lease payments are not similar in nature to "original" construction, repairs, [or] reconstruction" as those performance obligations have concrete start and end dates and require physical work to be completed—not simply the continuous and

regular transmission of a monetary amount.

Dela Cruz said Article 11 does not excuse Rota Resort LLC's failure to make lease payments because even if the pandemic could be considered a *force majeure* event, Rota Resort LLC did not present any evidence to establish that the *force majeure* event continued until March 8, 2023, when DPL issued the notice of termination.

Citing the CNMI Supreme Court's ruling in the Commonwealth Casino Commission complaints against Imperial Pacific International (CNMI) LLC, Dela Cruz said the Supreme Court treats the COVID-19 *force majeure* event as having ended before January 2023.

The high court said IPI has agreed that the "force majeure event has now ended, meaning that the unpaid fees are now due within a reasonable period of time..."

Dela Cruz said Rota Resort LLC has never resumed making lease payments to DPL and has not proven that any *force majeure* event that may have existed in 2020 still continued to exist into 2023 or even 2022.

He said Rota Resort LLC has failed to present any evidence that its failure to pay was not already 30 days overdue as of the time DPL issued the notice of termination in March 2023.

In May 2020, Rota Resort LLC contacted DPL regarding payment of its outstand-

ing rental obligation, stating that they applied for Paycheck Protection Program loan and will pay the lease as soon as they receive the loan.

On May 6, 2020, a PPP loan in the amount of \$186,155 was approved for Rota Resort LLC, but the company did not make any rental payment to DPL.

Rota Resort LLC has not made any rental payment to DPL for the period beginning July 1, 2020.

In December 2020, DPL sent a notice of violation to Rota Resort LLC listing numerous violations of the lease agreement, including failure to make timely quarterly lease rental payments.

Rota Resort LLC received revenue during the period from April 2020 through June 2021 from the operation of its golf course, real estate, gift shop, and spa.

In his decision, Dela Cruz said Rota Resort has not operated the golf course or hotel since on or before July 28, 2022.

Dela Cruz said that, according to Cho's testimony, all business operations at Rota Resort had been closed and most employees had been terminated since June 2022.

The hearing officer said Rota Resort LLC did not secure a written consent from DPL to cease operation of the golf course or hotel.

He said Rota Resort LLC has not communicated to DPL any plans to renovate or reopen the golf course or hotel.

DOC

From page 1

he is tentatively looking at launching the 10th Cycle of DOC's Corrections academy in February 2024.

"I will be looking for the Commonwealth's finest young men and women to be part of this correctional academy, which will be the 10th cycle," he said.

DOC currently has about 110 Corrections officers and Torres said he would be comfortable with an additional 25.

"Ideally, I would like to have a total of 150 officers. I would

love to pick up about 30 to 40 cadets, but due to budget constraints... I'm okay with an additional 25. I'm looking to get us beefed up in our staffing and to get this going," he said.

Torres, with his vast knowledge and experience in Corrections, will take part in the academy.

"I'm going to be a part of this academy, whether it being an instructor or going out and observing. I'm excited because it's an opportunity for jobs, to build our staff, and it's an opportunity to be a part of the training. We will be working with the Northern Marianas College," he said.

CUC

From page 1

oil issues such as repairing and replacing infrastructure, managing tanks and pipelines, and spill prevention and response.

Wehlburg said in an interview on Thursday that, as TMO, she oversees all oil-related issues like the disposal of petroleum contaminated products and makes sure that CUC complies with requirements and regulations of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Bureau of Environmental & Coastal Quality, Coast Guard, and Clean Air Act and the Safe Drinking Water Act.

Wehlburg started as TMO last June. Her professional background is maritime. She graduated from the U.S. Mer-

chant Marine Academy.

"I sailed deep sea for eight years under the...Marine Engineers' Beneficial Association. And now I'm here," she said.

Before joining CUC, Wehlburg was sailing maritime with APL with a route between Saipan, Guam, Korea, and Japan.

"So I just wanted to get a job shoreside because I was sick of being gone half a year with my job. So I decided to try and find work here and I saw the opening," she said.

She lives on Saipan with her wife and their son. They've been here for almost five years now.

Wehlburg was born in Florida, but she and her family moved to Washington, D.C. when she was very young.

Manglona nomination advances to full US Senate

The U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee has advanced to the full Senate the nomination of Ramona V. Manglona, to be judge for the U.S. District Court of the Northern Mariana Islands.

This was learned from a news release issued by the

office of U.S. Senate Majority Whip Dick Durbin (D-IL), who chairs the Senate Judiciary Committee.

The next stage is for the full U.S. Senate to vote on Manglona's nomination.

Manglona is the current chief judge of the U.S. District Court for the NMI, but her first 10-year term expired in 2021. President Joe Biden has nominated her for the position for another 10-year term.

Manglona's nomination was one of three judicial nominations the U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee recommended to the full Senate last week, "continuing the committee's work filling judicial and executive vacancies with highly qualified,

diverse candidates who help ensure the fair and impartial administration of the American justice system."

"I would like to thank Senators Lankford and Mullin and the White House for their bipartisan commitment to filling these two district court vacancies in Oklahoma. Their willingness to work together has resulted in two outstanding nominees, which we advanced this morning. Today's votes continue Senate Democrats' efforts to bring balance to the federal judiciary by advancing nominees who are committed to fair justice for all to the full Senate, and we're moving ahead with our efforts," said Durbin.

Following the confirmation of Judge Loren AliKhan to the District of D.C., the Senate has confirmed 161 judges to lifetime appointments on the federal bench under Durbin and during the Biden administration. Now, 19 lifetime judges—including three circuit court nominees and 14 district court nominees—are eligible for a vote on the Senate floor.

Aside from Manglona, the two others whose nominations also advanced to the full Senate are Sara E. Hill, to be U.S. District Judge for the Northern District of Oklahoma; and John David Russell, to be U.S. District Judge for the Northern District of Oklahoma.

Unlike most federal district court judges, who have lifetime appointments, the Marianas District Court judge, as well as those in Guam and the Virgin Islands, receive 10-year terms. *(Saipan Tribune)*

tion of Judge Loren AliKhan to the District of D.C., the Senate has confirmed 161 judges to lifetime appointments on the federal bench under Durbin and during the Biden administration. Now, 19 lifetime judges—including three circuit court nominees and 14 district court nominees—are eligible for a vote on the Senate floor.

Aside from Manglona, the two others whose nominations also advanced to the full Senate are Sara E. Hill, to be U.S. District Judge for the Northern District of Oklahoma; and John David Russell, to be U.S. District Judge for the Northern District of Oklahoma.

Unlike most federal district court judges, who have lifetime appointments, the Marianas District Court judge, as well as those in Guam and the Virgin Islands, receive 10-year terms. *(Saipan Tribune)*



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

PASAI Programme director Susana Lauu (seated in center) and Auditor General Eriati Manaima (seated on far right) with staff from the Kiribati Audit Office.



From left, Deputy Accountant General James Ruatu, audit supervisor Tematang Raimon, PASAI Programme director Susana Lauu, and Accountant General, Toromon Metutera.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

BAIRIKI, Kiribati—Pacific Association of Supreme Audit Institutions programme director Susana Lauu visited Kiribati last week to provide in-person technical support.

Auditor-General Eriati Manaima and his staff at the Kiribati Audit Office hosted Lauu during her mission.

The primary purpose of Lauu's trip was to assist and guide the staff responsible for the 2022 Financial Statements of Government with the audit planning and process. PASAI's central strategic priority is that its member audit offices complete high-quality audits of government accounts on a timely basis.

Lauu explained, "It's very important that auditors have a broad understanding of government operations, the nature of key components of the FSG, and linkages to the work of each ministry to ensure the government budget is appropriately expensed and accounted for.

"Auditing is much more than double-checking numbers. Effective auditors must build relationships, communicate well and know what the right questions are to obtain the relevant information."


Lauu discussed with KAO staff the challenges impacting workflow and timelines to the FSG audit, and how to manage those challenges with existing resources.

On her final day in Kiribati, Lauu paid a courtesy visit to senior staff at the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development. Accompanied by Audit Supervisor Tematang Raimon, Lauu met Accountant General Toromon Metutera and Deputy Accountant General James Ruatu.


Before leaving Ms Lauu

assured the auditor-general that PASAI will continue its support of KAO online and in person where needed near the closing of the FY2022 FSG audit.

PASAI acknowledges the support of the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade and the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. *(PR)*



Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
Office of the Secretary of Public Works
2nd floor-Oleai Joeten Commercial Center, Saipan, MP 96950



ADDENDUM NO. 1
December 11, 2023

DPW24-ITB No. 42400006

Project Name: **Route 36 (Windward/Kalabera Road) Improvement, Phase 1A**
Project No.: **TQ-THS-0036(301)**

- General:** The following revisions, additions, corrections, and/or clarifications to the specification and drawings shall apply to the work hereby. Careful note of this Addendum shall be taken by the bidder/contractor, and all trades affected shall be fully advised of the information contained herein. In the event of the conflict between the drawings, specification and his Addendum, the contents of this Addendum shall govern. All further conflicts in the work resulting from, or caused by, the contents of this Addendum must be brought to the attention of the Contracting Officer for resolution. Failure to acknowledge this bid Addendum with instructions may subject your bid to rejection on the affected item(s) service(s).
- Submission of Bid Documents:**
The scheduled bid submission is cancelled, below is the new Bid Submission schedule.

Sealed bids shall be marked "DPW24-ITB No. 42400006". For bidders within the CNMI, an original and two copies of sealed bids must be submitted to the Office of the Director of Procurement Services, located at Building 12552, Anatahan Drive, Capitol Hill, Saipan no later than 10:00 am local time December 28, 2023.


Bidders located outside of the CNMI may obtain an additional 7 working days for receipt of their bids by submitting a Notice of Intent to bid. Notices of Intent to bid must be received by the Director of Procurement Services no later than 10:00am local time, December 28, 2023, and must be transmitted via facsimile to (670) 664-1515, or via e-mail to bidintent@dof.gov.mp. For bidders located outside the CNMI, an original and two copies of sealed bids must be postmarked by the U.S. Postal Service or the official government postal service of a foreign country no later than December 28, 2023 and the BID documents must be received at the Office of the Director of Procurement Services no later than January 9, 2024. Note that failure to submit the required number of copies may be cause for rejection of a bid.

Bids will be publicly opened and read at the office of the Director of procurement services, located at Building 12552, Anatahan Drive, Capitol Hill, Saipan, at 10:00 a.m. local time, January 9, 2024. However, if no notices of intent to bid were received from bidders outside the CNMI, bids will be opened at 10:00 a.m. local time, on December 28, 2023.


All other requirements on the Invitation for Bids of the project package shall remain as stated.

/S/ RAY N. YUMUL
SECRETARY OF PUBLIC WORKS

/S/ BRIEN SERS NICHOLAS JR.
Acting Director
of Procurement Services



COMMONWEALTH UTILITIES CORPORATION
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



INVITATION FOR BIDS
CUC-IFB-24-003

Carolina Heights Waterline Replacement

The Office of the Executive Director, Commonwealth Utilities Corporation (CUC) is soliciting competitive sealed bids from qualified firms for the Carolina Heights Waterline Replacement in Tinian, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. The project consists of the installation of a waterline main, service laterals, connection to the existing waterline main, and the installation of fire hydrants.

The project is funded by a grant from the US Department of Interior/Office of Insular Affairs (US DOI/OIA) and CUC. The award of this project is contingent upon receipt of approval for project award from US DOI/OIA.

CUC requires the project to be completed in **210 calendar days** from the date of award of the contract.

Prospective Bidders for this IFB must pre-register with the CUC Procurement & Supply Division. The IFB package may be obtained from the CUC Procurement and Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, Saipan, between 7:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, except on government observed holidays upon completion of registration and presentation of a receipt evidencing a non-refundable payment to the CUC Treasury Section, by cash, check or credit card in the amount of \$200.00 for one IFB package set.

A Pre-Bid Conference will be held on **December 12, 2023 at 10:00 AM (ChST)** at the CUC Main Conference Room, 3rd Floor, Room No. 17, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building.

One (1) original and Five (5) copies of the bid MUST be submitted in a sealed envelope marked **"CUC-IFB-24-003, Carolina Heights Waterline Replacement"** to the CUC Procurement & Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, P.O. Box 501220, Saipan, MP 96950, no later than **10:00 AM (ChST) on December 27, 2023**, at which time they will be publicly opened and read aloud. Bids mailed via postal or courier service must be received on or before the due date and time or post-marked before the due date and time. Bid shall be submitted on the provided Bid Forms. Bidders are required to complete all Bid Forms. Bidders may supplement this form as appropriate. Bids will be required to be submitted under a condition of irrevocability for a period of 60 days after submission. **Late submissions and conditional bids will not be considered.**

A Bid Guarantee of **fifteen percent (15%)** of the total bid price must accompany the bids. The bid guarantee may be in cash, certified check, cashier's check, or bid bond executed by a surety company holding a certificate of authority from the United States Secretary of Treasury as an acceptable surety.

A **Payment Bond** of one hundred (100%) percent and a **Performance Bond** of one hundred (100%) percent of the total bid price will be required upon the execution of the contract by the successful bidders. The Payment and Performance bond must be executed by a surety company holding a certificate of authority from the United States Secretary of Treasury as an acceptable surety. Surety Company must be authorized to do business in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

All insurers' questions, concerns and qualification shall be handled by the Department of Commerce Office of the Insurance Commissioner (OIC). The OIC is tasked with regulating and monitoring compliance to the CNMI's Insurance Code (Title 4, Division 7). *Bidders are required to submit clearance from the OIC certifying their insurer of choice is in compliance with the CNMI's Insurance Code.*

All bidders are advised that CUC assumes no responsibility in any act of omission on the part of the bidders due to lack of information or understanding of the bid requirements in the course of Contractor's preparation of a bid under the contract. Bidders are required to comply with all CNMI and applicable Federal Laws. This bid and the ensuing contract shall be executed pursuant to the CUC Procurement Regulations.

This Invitation for Bids does not commit CUC to the award of a contract or contracts, nor to pay any cost incurred in the preparation and submission of bids in anticipation of a contract.

Questions or requests for clarification will be entertained only from pre-registered bidders and must be submitted in writing no later than **10:00 AM (ChST) on December 14, 2023** to Mr. Manny B. Sablan, Jr., CUC Procurement & Supply Purchasing Administrator, via email address manny.sablan@cucgov.org, with a copy to Larry Manacop, Acting Chief Engineer via email at larry.manacop@cucgov.org, Joel Puyat, Engineer via email at joel.puyat@cucgov.org and Ms. Christie L. Sablan, Procurement & Supply, Senior Administrative Technician via email address at christie.sablan@cucgov.org.

CUC reserves the right to reject any or all bids for any reason and waive any defects in said bid proposal, if in its sole opinion, to do so would be in the best interest of CUC. All bids shall become the property of CUC.

BETTINA G. TERLAJE
Acting Executive Director

MANNY B. SABLAN
Purchasing Administrator

Australia pushes vs China's Pacific influence through security pact with PNG

CANBERRA, Australia (AP)—The Australian government signed a security pact with its nearest neighbor Papua New Guinea on Thursday that strengthens Australia's place as the preferred security partner in a region where China's influence is growing.

Prime Minister Anthony Albanese and his Papuan counterpart James Marape signed the agreement in Australia's Parliament House six months later than initially planned.

The June date was abandoned after a security deal struck between the United States and Marape's government sparked protests in the South Pacific nation in May over concerns that it undermined Papua New Guinea's sovereignty.

Marape said the agreement with Australia respects both nations' sovereignty and was initiated by his government.

He said the security agreements with Australia and the United States did not mean he was siding with those nations in their strategic competition against China.

"Our major foreign policy as friends to all, enemies to none remains. And it's never picking sides," Marape told reporters.

Albanese said both Australia



Australia's Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, left, meets with Papua New Guinea's Prime Minister James Marape at Parliament House in Canberra, Australia, Thursday, Dec. 7, 2023. T

lia and Papua New Guinea's negotiators achieved what they wanted in the agreement.

"This is a comprehensive and a historical agreement," Albanese said. "It will make it easier for Australia to help PNG address its internal security needs and for Australia and Papua New Guinea to

support each other's security and the region stability."

Both governments have committed to release full details of the agreement but have yet to do so.

The agreement is less significant than the treaty-level pact proposed early in the year, but the differences are

not yet apparent.

Papua New Guinea is a diverse, developing nation of mostly subsistence farmers with 800 languages in a strategically important part of the South Pacific.

With 10 million people, it also the most populous South Pacific nation after Australia,

which is home to 26 million.

Papua New Guinea is a near-neighbor of the Solomon Islands where the government sent shock waves through the Pacific last year by striking a security pact with China. The pact raised fears of a Chinese naval base being established there.

China later fell short in an

ambitious attempt to get 10 Pacific island nations, including Papua New Guinea, to sign a sweeping deal covering everything from security to fisheries.

Mihai Sora, an expert on Papua New Guinea at the Sydney-based international policy think tank Lowy Institute, said the pact cemented Australia's position as a primary security partner in the region.

"For Australia, it's very much about bedding down the regional security order. Projecting to other Pacific countries that Australia is a trusted security partner," Sora said.

"The primary security dividend for Papua New Guinea will be addressing internal security concerns," Sora added.

Papua New Guinea struggles to contain escalating tribal violence and civil unrest in remote regions and has a long-term aim to increase its police numbers from 6,000 officers to 26,000.

Australia has agreed to support Papua New Guinea's internal security in areas of policing, courts and prisons.

Australia will support the running of a new police training center in the capital Port Moresby that will be open to recruits from other Pacific nations.



DIVISION OF PROCUREMENT SERVICES CNMI GOVERNMENT



REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL RFP NO.: RFP24-DCCA/HP0-42400004

SUBMISSION DATE: DECEMBER 29, 2023 TIME: 10:00 A.M.

"DCCA-HISTORIC PRESERVATION EMERGENCY SUPPLEMENTAL DISASTER PROJECT MANAGEMENT SERVICES"

COPIES OF THE SPECIFICATIONS MAY BE OBTAINED ON THE MUNIS VENDOR SELF SERVICE PORTAL (<https://selfservice.dof.gov.mp/vss/>) OR AT THE OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR OF PROCUREMENT SERVICES, LOCATED AT BLDG NO. 12552, ANATAHAN DRIVE, CAPTIOL HILL, SAIPAN, DURING REGULAR WORKING HOURS.

QUESTIONS REGARDING THIS RFP CAN BE MADE TO THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY AND CULTURAL AFFAIRS BY DECEMBER 21, 2023, TO MR. FRANCISCO RABAUIMAN VIA EMAIL AT frank.rabauliman@gov.mp

THE PROVISIONS OF THE CNMI PROCUREMENT REGULATIONS, NMIAC SECTION 70-30.3-725 AND 70-30.3-730 PROHIBITING GRATUITIES, KICKBACKS AND CONTINGENT FEES SHALL APPLY.

THE CNMI GOVERNMENT RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REJECT ANY OR ALL BIDS, OR PORTIONS THEREOF, AND WAIVE IMMATERIAL DEFECTS IF TO DO SO WOULD BE IN THE BEST INTEREST OF THE CNMI GOVERNMENT.

/S/ VIVIAN T. SABLAN
ACTING SECRETARY, DCCA

/S/ BRIEN S. NICHOLAS JR.
ACTING DIRECTOR, PS



Commonwealth Healthcare Corporation

Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
1 Lower Navy Hill Road Navy Hill, Saipan, MP 96950



"ADDENDUM"

Extension of Offeror Question from 12/7/2023 - 01/08/2024

Extension of Submission Date from 12/15/2023 to 01/15/2024

RFP24-CHCC/HIT-EMR/EHR-002A

"COMMONWEALTH HEALTH CENTER CERTIFIED ELECTRONIC HEALTH RECORD IMPLEMENTATION PROJECT"

Notice to Offerors

The Request for Proposal (RFP) for the "Community Health Center Certified Electronic Health Record Implementation Project" (RFP24-CHCC/HIT-EMR/EHR-002) is available on this website; <https://www.chcc.health/RFP/requestforproposal.php>.

Issuer Information

This RFP is issued by the Commonwealth Healthcare Corporation (CHCC) of the Northern Marianas Islands, 1178 Hinemlu St. Garapan, Saipan MP 96950.

Notice of Intent to Submit a Proposal

Interested offerors must email a "Notice of Intent to Submit a Proposal" to Commonwealth Healthcare Corporation (CHCC) Procurement Director, Cora Ada, at cora.ada@chcc.health as soon as practicable. This notice ensures that all interested parties receive relevant information on RFP updates or questions. While this step is crucial, it does not bind the offeror to make a submission. If an interested offeror fails to submit a notice of intent, they acknowledge and accept the risk of potentially missing crucial information.

All notices of intent to submit a proposal must include the RFP number (RFP24-CHCC/HIT-EMR/EHR-002) and project title, "Community Health Center Certified Electronic Health Record Implementation Project", in the subject line. The content of the email should state the Offeror organization name, at least one primary email contact, and a brief statement of intent to submit a proposal.

Communication Protocol

Questions about this RFP will only be received in writing via email to CHCC Director of IT, Bel Busby at bel.busby@chcc.health and CHCC Procurement Director, Cora Ada at cora.ada@chcc.health with the RFP number and project title as the subject. Questions communicated verbally may not be answered. Offerors must avoid direct communication about this RFP with other CHCC staff members.

RFP Timeline

- Deadline for Offeror questions is **3:00 P.M. (Chamorro Standard Time), January 8th, 2024.**
- Final proposals must be submitted as docx or pdf attachments via email to Cora.Ada@chcc.health, and must be received by **4:30 P.M. (Chamorro Standard Time), January 15th, 2024.**
- Late proposals won't be accepted.

Women’s Work Wear Drive



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
Office of Women’s Affairs volunteer as well as Northern Marianas Technical Institute Cosmetology student and owner of Beauty by Hannah, Hannah Blanco, takes a photo with NMTECH marketing and outreach coordinator Benjamin Babauta during the afternoon session of the Office of Women’s Affairs’ Women’s Work Wear Drive last Dec. 7 at the Pedro P Tenorio Multi-Purpose Center in Susupe.




CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
Northern Marianas Technical Institute nail instructor Moriah Sablan does a participant’s nails during the Office of Women’s Affairs’ Women’s Work Wear Drive last Dec. 7 at the Pedro P. Tenorio Multi-Purpose Center in Susupe.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
NMTECH Cosmetology/Hair instructor and Salt and Barber salon manager Curt Ellis does a participant’s hair during the Office of Women’s Affairs’ Women’s Work Wear Drive last Dec. 7 at the Pedro P Tenorio Multi-Purpose Center in Susupe.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
Miss Bikini Marianas head Yvette Kautz, center top, along with models, bottom left to right, Leah Halstead and Sophia Heras take care of a mini work wear fashion show for the afternoon participants of the Office of Women’s Affairs’ Women’s Work Wear Drive last Dec. 7 at the Pedro P Tenorio Multi-Purpose Center in Susupe.





COMMONWEALTH JUDICIARY ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE
Guma' Hustisia / Iimwal Aweewe / House of Justice
P.O. Box 502165 • Saipan, MP 96950
Telephone (670) 236-9700/9800 • Facsimile: (670) 236-9702
Website: www.NMIjudiciary.gov

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY

The Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) Judiciary is seeking a highly motivated individual for the position of:

STAFF ATTORNEY
LAW REVISION COMMISSION
Announcement # JVA24-003

DUTIES: The successful candidate will work under the general supervision of Chief Justice and/or the LRC Executive Director. The candidate is expected to perform the following Duties and Responsibilities:

- Assist in the production, publication, and periodical revision of the Northern Mariana Islands Commonwealth Code (CMC) consisting of Commonwealth public laws and local laws in conformance with the Commission's scope of authority and already established office legal publishing stylistic standards and strict time lines.
- Assist in the production, publication, and periodical revision of the Northern Mariana Islands Administrative Code (NMIAC) consisting of Commonwealth administrative rules and regulations in conformance with the Commission's scope of authority and already established office legal publishing stylistic standards and strict time lines.
- The preparation of the CMC includes reviewing all public and local laws.
- The preparation of the NMIAC includes reviewing monthly Commonwealth Registers.
- Assist in the compiling and editing of the Reporter series, which includes preparing CNMI Supreme Court (i.e., appellate court) and Superior Court (i.e., trial court) decisions for publication by editing the decisions in conformance with already established office legal publishing stylistic standards and preparing head notes for each Supreme Court decision with analysis for inclusion in a head note digest system and citation tables.
- Assist in the production, publication, and periodical revision of the CMC Index, Digest of Decisions, and other legal publications.
- Research legal issues and prepare legal memorandums as directed by the Executive Director.
- Assist the Office of the General Counsel with procurement, human resources, legal analysis, and other matters as assigned.
- Assist the Office of the General Counsel by reviewing the American Rescue Plan Act and its implementing guidelines and provide legal assistance in all related matters including federal compliance, procurement, audit, contract management, and human resources.
- Perform other duties specified by the Executive Director, including but not limited to, assuming acting director capacity in the absence of the director.

QUALIFICATIONS AND REQUIREMENTS: The Staff Attorney must have a Juris Doctor degree from an ABA accredited law school and be admitted to the CNMI Bar, or admitted to another U.S. jurisdiction Bar Association so that they may qualify for temporary admission to the CNMI Bar as a CNMI government attorney. Directly related codification and/or legal publication experience is preferred but not required.

Keen legal analysis skills; strong writing skills with an excellent grasp of grammar and punctuation; proficient in operating a personal computer and working with MS Word and Adobe Acrobat; and impeccable organizational skills.

Candidate must provide current police and traffic clearances and proof of eligibility to work in the CNMI. Must have a valid drivers' license and operate a court vehicle. Applicants given a conditional offer of employment with the CNMI Judiciary will be required to submit to urinalysis to screen for the illegal use of drugs prior to employment. "Illegal drug" means a substance whose use or possession is controlled by federal law but that is not being used or possessed under the supervision of a licensed health care professional. (Controlled substances are listed in Schedules I-IV of 21 C.F.R. Part 1308.)

Education completed in foreign colleges or universities may be used to meet the job qualification requirements if the applicant can show that foreign education is comparable to education received in accredited educational institutions in the United States.

It is the responsibility of the applicant to provide such evidence when applying for Judiciary jobs. Education received in foreign colleges or universities will be considered if the candidate submits an evaluation of the coursework from: (a) an accredited U.S. college or university; or (b) a private professional organization specializing in interpretation of foreign educational credentials.

COMPENSATION AND TENURE: This position is appointed by and serves at the pleasure of the Chief Justice. The salary range will be \$64,000 - \$70,400 per annum.

INTERESTED PERSONS PERSONS Application forms are available at the Judiciary Administrative Office at the Guma Hustisia/Iimwal Aweewe/House of Justice in Susupe, or at the Superior Court offices on Kotten Tinian and Centron Hustisia in Rota during normal business hours except on weekends and holidays. Completed applications, cover letter, and three references to:

NMI Judiciary
Human Resources
Guma' Hustisia/Iimwal Aweewe/House of Justice
P.O. Box 502165
Saipan, MP 96950
Tel. (670) 236-9818
Cell. (670) 783-8592
Fax. (670) 236-9702
hr.judiciary@NMIjudiciary.gov

This job announcement will remain open until filled and can be seen and a printable copy of the application downloaded at <http://www.nmijudiciary.gov>

The Judiciary reserves the right to rescind or cancel this JVA at any time without notice.

THE CNMI JUDICIARY IS AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY PROVIDER AND EMPLOYER.

¹The following organizations evaluate foreign educational credentials for employment and other purposes. All operate on a fee based on the extent of the education to be evaluated; applicants shall bear the cost of evaluation.
(a) Credentials Evaluation Service P.O. Box 24679 Los Angeles, CA 90024
(b) Education Equivalency Evaluation World Education Services P.O. Box 745 Old Chelsea Station New York, NY 10011
(c) Education Credential Evaluators, Inc. P.O. Box 17499 Milwaukee, WI 53217
(d) International Consultants of Delaware, Inc. 914 Pickett Lane Newark, DE 19711
(e) Foundation for International Services, Inc. P.O. Box 230278 Portland, OR 97223.
While the Judiciary offer these addresses as information to applicants who request assistance in obtaining an evaluation of foreign education, these services are not preferred over others which may exist.

Opinion

Hafa Adai!

Saipan Tribune

THE CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER

Volume XXXIII, Issue No. 246

Published daily at 2/F JP Center,
Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan, CNMI
Mailing Address: PMB 34, Box 10001, Saipan, MP, 96950

Mark Rabago EDITOR
mark_rabago@saipantribune.com

MEMBER

AP The Associated Press

Pacific Islands News Association

EDITORIAL

Community must again endure mass shooting tragedy

Las Vegas grieve one more time following a senseless multiple shooting. Will this insanity ever stop?

Six years after a devastated community endured the Oct. 1 rampage on the Strip, a gunman on Wednesday opened fire at UNLV in Beam Hall, home to the business school. There were reports of shots fired at the Student Union. Three people were killed. At least one more was seriously injured.

The violence began around 11:45 a.m. The campus bustled as students were preparing for semester exams next week. But the anticipation of holiday break was soon shattered by the horrific scene that unfolded.

Students reported hearing shots and described barricading doors with tables to protect themselves. It's a sorrowful sign of the times that many of these young adults have come of age at a time of active shooter drills intended to teach lockdown procedures during such an event. But this was no drill. A university police text urged students to "RUN-HIDE-FIGHT."

Allister Dias, editor of the Scarlet & Gray Free Press, UNLV's student newspaper, told the Review-Journal, "I was working at my desk, and I heard like a series of sirens outside. I think it was like one or two cop cars, and I go to the window just to see what it is, and I saw kids running across the parking lot. I'm thinking, wait, what's going on?" He then heard "very audible gunshots, like pop, pop, pop, pop, pop, pop."

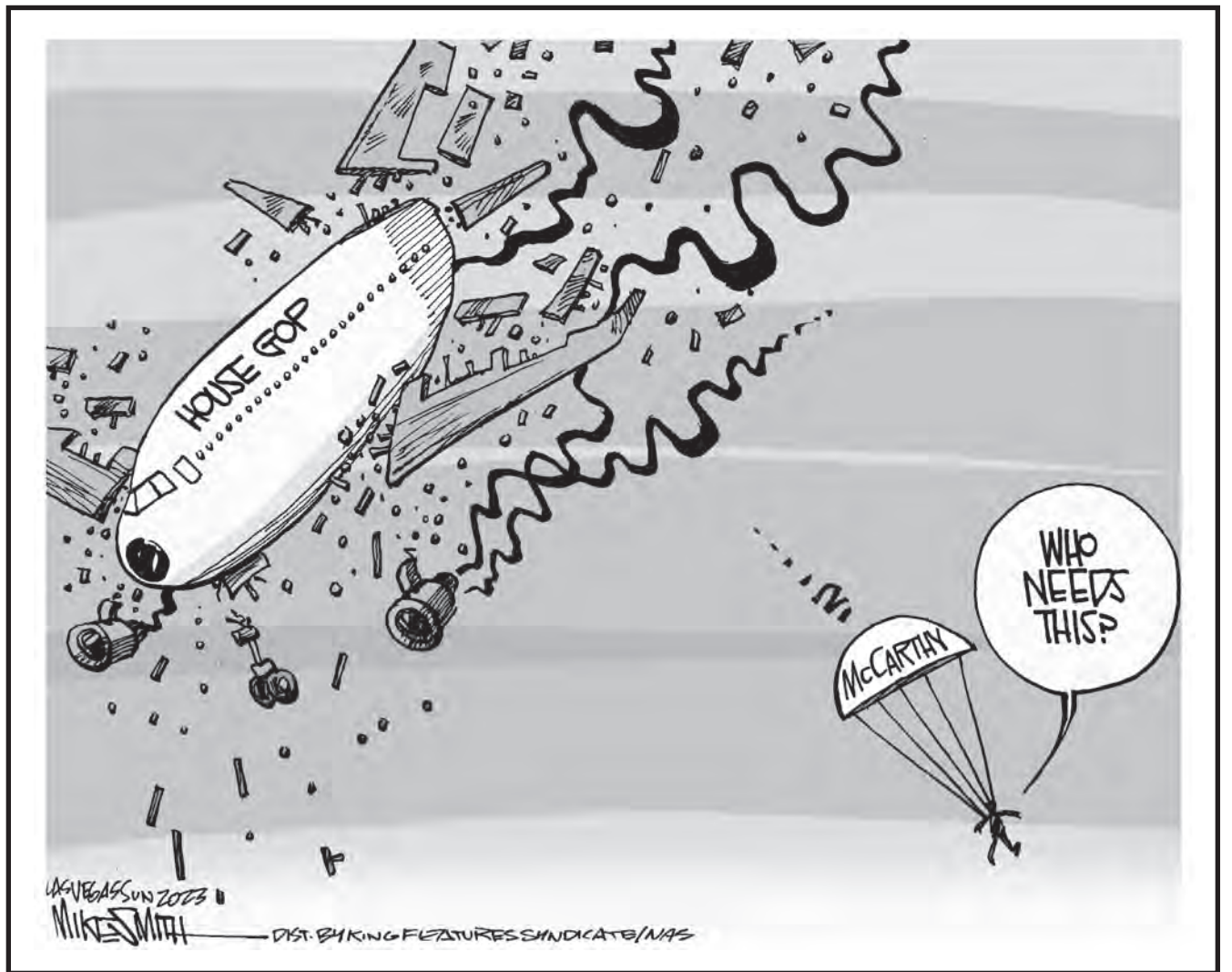
By about 1 p.m. police reported that there was "no further threat." Officers had "engaged" the suspect, Sheriff Kevin McMahon said. Yet many students and faculty remained hiding in classrooms, unsure whether it was safe to emerge. Police began going door to door on campus to reassure those still sheltering.

Law enforcement—the Metropolitan Police Department and UNLV campus police—acted decisively to secure the campus area and address the threat. This likely saved many lives.

The stale guns vs. mental health bickering that inevitably follows these horrific occurrences has already begun. But no matter where one comes down in that debate, a society that produces so many lost and delusional souls who believe their salvation requires mass homicide is suffering from deeper, more entrenched maladies. More details will emerge in the coming days. For now our thoughts are with the victims and their loved ones and those in the UNLV family—parents, students, staff, faculty—forced to suffer unthinkable trauma.

Las Vegas responded to the Oct. 7 shooting with compassion, strength, resiliency and a heightened sense of community that arises from shared tragedy. It's imperative we come together once again.

©2023 Las Vegas Review-Journal



As a Gaza teen, I used to dream of college. Now I feel sentenced to death by Israel's bombings

By **SALMA HAMAD**
LOS ANGELES TIMES

SOUTHERN GAZA—Until two months ago, my life as a 17-year-old in Gaza was marked by the predictable anxieties and aspirations of a student applying to university. I dreamt of crossing borders to pursue a better life—of landing on my feet at an American school and, eventually, of returning to serve my community as a doctor. Education was my blueprint for escaping this city of war.

Now as I huddle in a cramped, dimly lit room with 12 other women in Rafah, those dreams seem like fragments of another life. Our stomachs echo with hunger, and our throats burn with thirst. We exist in constant darkness, the world illuminated only by the flashes of missiles and the red glow of destruction.

As you read this, I urge you to pause—to hear the shrill sirens and the heart-stopping booms of bombs and feel the tremors that shake our jaws.

I have lived in Gaza for 17 years. But amid the ruins, I no longer recognize its streets. Where will I walk now?

My family was forced to leave our home when the war broke out. I took only one bag—I wish it were large enough to carry my house, my cat, my memories. This week, when the Israeli army reached Khan Yunis, we had to flee for the fourth time.

Even before Oct. 7, children in Gaza were born with the burden of survival. We learned to walk on rubble, avoiding shrapnel like puddles. Still, this time is different. Looking around, I find myself in a space too small for dreams; there is only room for nightmares. Each morning, I awake from a few fleeting hours of sleep to news of another relative's death.

The Israeli bombings are not only attacks on our city, but assaults on our humanity. They have destroyed our hospitals, schools and places of worship, including mosques and churches.

I am not a terrorist. I am a student, a sister, a daughter. My dreams are not a weapon; they are how I hope to rise above this conflict. Children in Gaza think not of conquest or destruction but of a life untouched by the tyrant of war. We dream of classrooms, not wreckage; of playgrounds, not bomb craters.

Our deaths should not be inevitable. Over the past weeks, my Instagram feed has been flooded with voices from around the globe uniting in an urgent plea for a cease-fire.

It is not enough to lament the loss of life. There must be an unyielding effort to protect it. To devalue a Palestinian life—to

see it as less worthy of safety and dignity—is inhumane. Ceasing the bombardment is a moral obligation.

How are we, the children of Gaza, to embrace Israel, when every explosion that shatters the sky shapes our understanding of the world? Each bomb ravaging our streets sows deep within us seeds of fear, anger and mistrust—seeds that threaten to sprout and entangle our hearts for years to come. Even if we stay alive, what will become of our futures? Our innocence folds amid this onslaught, which we neither chose nor understand.

More than 15,000 people in Gaza, 70% of them women and children, have already been slaughtered. Thousands more lie unrecognizable under the rubble. Up to 1.8 million Palestinians have been displaced, myself included. We are not faceless statistics, but innocent human beings. History will look to us to measure the cost of moral weakness—the consequences of dismissing the sanctity of all human life.

In Gaza, age is a fallacy. It is the most dangerous place on Earth to be a child. Since October, I have lost more friends than has my 78-year-old grandmother. The anguish has become a companion of my existence. If I were your daughter, would you stand for it?

President Biden's own life has been marked by profound loss—a deep, aching grief that I feel, too. So I wonder: Will he save us? Will he join the chorus demanding a cease-fire? Our lives hang in the balance, tethered to the hope that the world will recognize our humanity. This is not a call for political intervention but a plea for compassion. We do not ask for heroes. We ask for empathy.

Over the past two months, the stars have been obscured by smoke, but I know they are there. They live above Gaza's smog, shining reminders of a world beyond war. I aspire to be among those stars—a beacon of hope in a sky darkened by violence.

I feel that I have been sentenced to death, but death no longer scares me. I only fear that when I die, my story will be forgotten.

We plead with Israel, the U.S. and the world: Please end the bombardment. Let the children of Gaza dream again.

Salma Hamad is a teenager in Gaza who still hopes to apply to British and American universities. With the help of Al Muntaha Tutoring, an online charity that educates young Arabs in English, she has been documenting her experiences of the war.

EDITORIAL POLICY

Letters to the editor must include the NAME, VILLAGE ADDRESS, and CONTACT NUMBER of the contributor. Letters that do not have these information will immediately be trashed. Contributions consisting of 500 words or less have more chances of getting published. The *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to publish a contribution or not; the right to edit submissions for length, accuracy, and clarity; and the right to publish and distribute contributions in print, electronic, or other media formats. Submissions may be sent via snail mail to the 2nd Floor, JP Center, Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan, 96950; fax (670) 235-3740; e-mail to editor@saipantribune.com; or through our website at www.saipantribune.com.

What is societal burnout? We are living it

Are you waking up with a lump in your throat that never used to be there? Is there an ache in your chest—best described as heartache—relatively new to you? Do you look at your children, fearing for their future and well-being? Do your eyes fill with tears, but you are not sure why?

If so, I join you. We are experiencing societal burnout. We are overburdened by a perfect storm of threatening societal challenges and a fiercely divided electorate. We are overwhelmed by moral distress due to those in positions of power and influence who, rather than address grave challenges, skillfully work to pit citizens against each other, intensify fear and anxieties, and undermine the rule of law to gain control and power.

In 1974, psychologist Herbert Freudenberger was the first to identify the burnout syndrome: Due to excessive demands on energy, strength and resources, a person becomes overwhelmed, exhausted and “inoperative.” Although they did not use the term burnout in their groundbreaking 1970 book “Future Shock,” Alvin and Heidi Toffler predicted that the breathtaking pace of our technological revolution would bring unsettling change, challenge and increased crime. They warned that the illiterate of the future would no longer be those who can’t read or write but rather those unable to keep up with the demands of rapid change.

To cope, the Tofflers stressed preparing for the future with insight and creativity, implicitly calling on leaders to bring us together rather than exacerbate division.

That we as a society have failed in this effort became shockingly clear before the 2016 presidential election when client after client told me that America had forgotten them. This anger and frustration played an enormous role in the victory of Donald Trump, who was, and continues to be, seen as an ally of those who feel discarded and invisible.

The sense of isolation my clients shared caused me to intensify my research into the complexities of burnout—how it’s different from depression and what exactly has gone so very wrong. I’ve shared my findings at conferences, as well as social gatherings and book clubs, where I’ve focused on staying sane in a world gone mad.

Here are the basics of what I’ve learned: We are overlooking the process of how people develop into healthy, resilient, creative members of a family and a society, which is so necessary in this time of overload. There is an inevitable interactivity between personal development and the quality of political leadership.

Key to our future is offering children what they need for mature development: Specifically, children must feel loved and safe, which millions of children worldwide are denied. This said, something has gone terribly wrong in the lives of seemingly fortunate children, those who do not live in war-torn countries, are not abused in any apparent way and live in households that are economically sound. Yes, social media platforms are a monster, made more dangerous by deceptions nurtured by artificial intelligence, and tragically, our children are vulnerable to tormentors and bullies outside our homes. Yet, within our homes, far too many children are not properly nurtured.

Far too many are fed a diet of hatred and prejudice. Far too many are overindulged, raised to believe they are more special than others. And too many parents fear imposing necessary boundaries and limits. As a result, many children are denied the opportunity to develop dignity, a state of being that begins with love and is a prerequisite for mental health. It is dependent on pride—“I am a valuable human being”—and humility—“All others are as important and valuable as I am.”

Dignity is rooted in respect, self-awareness and awareness of others, and character, in other words. It allows one to listen deeply and question assumptions. It encourages respectful communication between those who disagree and fosters the ability to recognize those who cannot be trusted.

Tragically and dangerously, children denied the development of dignity express anger and emptiness through hatred and prejudice toward others. Without developing insight, they reach adulthood biologically but not emotionally. In essence, they are aging, fearful children. For them, love remains a foreign concept.

Many such “adults” become bullies and dictators. In democracies, they may assume positions of power and dominance in professional settings, on boards, and in elected or appointed office. Those without confidence or character cling to the perks their

By **SARAKAY SMULLENS**

Chicago Tribune

SaraKay Smullens is an award-winning Philadelphia-based licensed clinical social worker, certified family life educator and writer whose latest book is Burnout and Self-Care in Social Work: A Guidebook for Students and Those in Mental Health and Related Professions.



positions of power offer. Some may cling to pure fantasy: They wish to turn the clock back to a time that can never return. Still others, longing for a quality of parenting they never received, become fiercely devoted followers.

Eliminating societal burnout requires recognition of the essential link between personal development and trustworthy leadership, necessary in democracies for the survival of all we hold dear.

At the core of all trustworthy leadership is the ability to love. Dignity makes it possible.

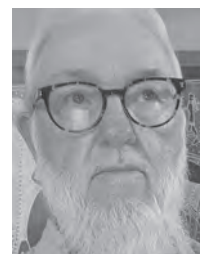
Red Caesarism and the GOP Schism Sonnets

LITERARY NOOK

By **JOEY CONNOLLY**

Special to the Saipan Tribune

Joey aka Pepe Batbon Connolly is a retired educator who taught in the CNMI, NOLA, and LVNV. He is a sonnet practitioner who enjoys stargazing.



The following sonnet begins a yearlong series of poems about former President Trump, inspired by Dante’s *Divine Comedy*. As some readers know, Dante began the book in Hell (Inferno), followed by Purgatory (Purgatorio) until he reached his ultimate goal of Heaven (Paradiso). My sonnets will follow Potus 45 through his 2024 campaign but not in Dante’s order. Some will contain all three locations in a tragicomedy using sonnet form.

Tragic Scenes from Paradise Reversed

A Don grew old who could not triumph over himself
From Queens, NY he wished to form a Trump kingdom
With a push and shove from his gilded toilets above
From his NY City Trump Tower for hour after hour
From Wash DC he detonated precepts of democracy
With vindictiveness, anger and vitriol he would shower
From his golf course in Mar a Lago he would glower
At his predecessor a former US Senator from Chicago
From his private National Golf Club in New Jersey
He administered Bedminster retribution with no mercy
From what he calls “the final battle” 2024 campaign trail
MAGA supporters cheer his every insult without fail
From different courts some with some without a jury
Judges give him gag orders raising his ire and fury.

“The Destroyer of American Democracy”

(Trump said this of President Joe Biden on Dec. 1, 2023)

A line from the Bhagavad Gita. Vishnu is trying to persuade the Prince that he should do his duty and to impress him he takes on his multi-armed form and says, “Now, I am become Death, the destroyer of worlds.” Readers who have seen the recent film Oppenheimer may recall his epiphany on these lines relative to the use of the atomic bomb which he helped develop. I include it here for the ludicrous aspect of 45’s projection calling President Biden the “destroyer of American democracy” when the media: radio, TV, newspapers, blogs, books, and the US Judicial system of government since the insurrection that he cooked up have all pointed to him as contributing to the destruction of democracy. Many of Trump’s 91 or 92 indictments relate to his attempts to distort and destroy constitutional democracy.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Supportive measures for discretionary parole program

U.S. lawmakers sent a joint letter to U.S. Department of Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro N. Mayorkas requesting to revoke the discretionary parole program for Chinese tourists entering the CNMI. The lawmakers raised significant concerns about the United States’ visa policy for Chinese nationals entering the Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands.

Gov. Arnold I. Palacios talked to the press and revealed that he was already aware of the letter weeks ago, even before some lawmakers publicly asked DHS to mandate the visa requirements.

The letter is stirring up discussions in the CNMI business sector. The local Chinese community is also cognizant of Gov. Palacios’ view on the China tourism. His pivot away from the China market remarks made headlines several times months ago. He takes a position on pivoting away China as a governor who needs dialogue and dealing with the federal government is a justifiable reason. While zero tourist and the economy on life support during COVID-19, the entire CNMI economy depended upon vital federally subsidized funding and relief programs. According to the U.S. Government Accountability Office’s report to congressional committees, federal agencies allocated more than \$1.9 billion in COVID-19 relief funding to the Northern Mariana Islands.

The discretionary parole program for Chinese tourists has been disordered and confused in past years. Rumors of the cancellation of the program have already been going around for many years. Some people have forecasted significant consequences or impacts. The U.S. lawmakers’ letter is oddly predictable, as far as I see.

According to Marianas Visitors Authority, the China market made up over 40% of the CNMI’s tourism industry pre-COVID-19. Therefore, we can conclude that the government will experience a shortfall of about 40% in tax revenues when a China market exit occurs.

The letter outlined the concerns of U.S. lawmakers that has merits and deserves attention. However, in my view, the drawbacks from

the discretionary parole program appear to be manageable. The CNMI can have multiple institutions taking part in planning and implementation to reduce the risks of border security and elevate economic security. Of course, the CNMI has a daunting list of things to do to tackle the issue.

In regards to the controlling of illegal immigration, in terms of population and geographic area, the CNMI is puny relative to the size of the U.S. mainland. According to USA Facts Nonpartisan Government Data: Between October 2019 and June 2023, the U.S. Customs and Border Protection reported almost 7.7 million border encounters across the U.S. Monthly encounters peaked at over 300,000 people in December 2022. (weblink: <https://usafacts.org>)

The Saipan Chamber of Commerce, Hotel Association, and some CNMI lawmakers, collectively propose ideas and solutions. One suggests a “legitimate, vetted visa for CNMI to allow Chinese nationals into the CNMI tourism” called the EVS-TAP Program. All relevant parties view the matter through their filter. It is difficult to predict the results.






The CNMI, a U.S. territory in the Pacific Ocean, sits at crossfire as tension between the U.S. and China escalates. Fortunately, on Nov. 15, at the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation meeting in San Francisco, U.S. President Joe Biden and Chinese President Xi Jinping had more than four hours of talks. After the meeting, on social media, Biden said he valued the conversation he had with President Xi. Biden said, “There are critical global challenges that demand our joint leadership. And today, we made real progress.” I sincerely hope talks between the CNMI and U.S. lawmakers will make progress as well.

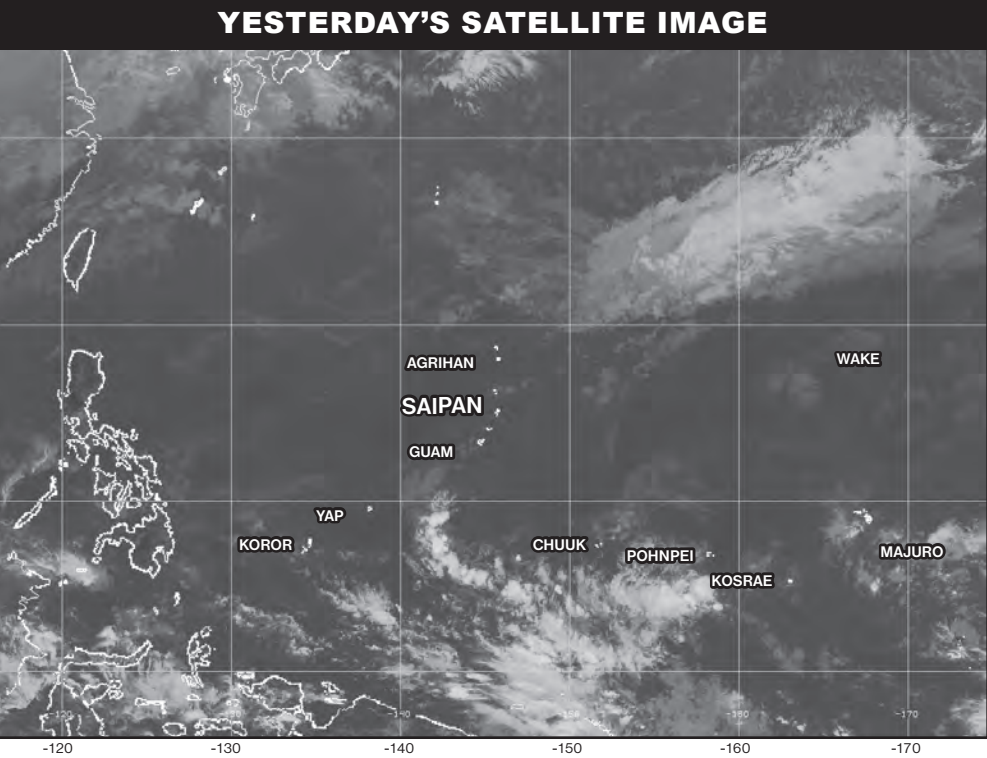
As an ancient Chinese proverb says: “The mountains are high and the Emperor is far away.” It is in the CNMI government’s best interest to persuade the distant, 7,801-mile-away D.C. policymakers about what the CNMI needs to achieve sustainable economic growth.

Betty Bai

Editor, *Saipan Chinese News*
Power Young Publishing

The Weather

5-DAY FORECAST FOR SAIPAN AND TINIAN									
TODAY		WEDNESDAY		THURSDAY		FRIDAY		SATURDAY	
									
Partly cloudy with isolated showers. East winds 10 to 15 mph.		Partly cloudy. Isolated showers. East winds 15 to 20 mph.		Partly cloudy with a 20 percent chance of showers.		Partly cloudy with a 20 percent chance of showers.		Partly cloudy with a 20 percent chance of showers.	
87	77°	87	77°	87	77°	87	77°	87	77°



PICTURE TIME: 6:54 AM, MONDAY, DECEMBER 11, 2023

Western North Pacific between equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

Isolated showers are crossing the region this morning with partly cloudy skies observed. Seas are near 6 feet and the water temperature is 84 degrees.

Satellite image and accompanying information are provided by the National Weather Service. For an updated weather forecast, visit the National Weather Service Guam homepage: <https://www.weather.gov/gum/>

MICRONESIA			▲▼°F
Guam and Rota	Partly Cloudy	86° / 78°	
Palau	Partly Cloudy	85° / 78°	
Yap	Partly Cloudy	85° / 79°	
Chuuk	Thunderstorms	86° / 80°	
Pohnpei	Thunderstorms	84° / 78°	
Kosrae	Thunderstorms	87° / 78°	
Majuro	Thunderstorms	85° / 80°	

DAY	SUNRISE	SUNSET
Today	6:33 AM	5:47 PM
Wednesday	6:33 AM	5:48 PM
Thursday	6:34 AM	5:48 PM
Friday	6:34 AM	5:48 PM
Saturday	6:35 AM	5:49 PM

DAY	MOONRISE	MOONSET	MOONRISE
Today	5:33 AM	4:59 PM	-
Wednesday	6:35 AM	5:56 PM	-
Thursday	7:38 AM	6:58 PM	-
Friday	8:39 AM	8:03 PM	-
Saturday	9:36 AM	9:08 PM	-

AROUND THE GLOBE			▲▼°F
Auckland	Partly Cloudy	73° / 63°	
Beijing	Mostly Cloudy	30° / 18°	
Hong Kong	Cloudy	66° / 64°	
Honolulu	Showers	81° / 71°	
London	Showers	39° / 34°	
Los Angeles	Sunny	82° / 51°	
Manila	Partly Cloudy	88° / 75°	
Melbourne	Mostly Sunny	82° / 59°	
Miami	Sunny	70° / 55°	
New York	Mostly Sunny	44° / 35°	
Osaka	Mostly Cloudy	48° / 39°	
Paris	Showers	43° / 34°	
Busan	Mostly Sunny	50° / 43°	
Rome	Rain	59° / 50°	
Salem	Sunny	56° / 38°	
San Francisco	Sunny	64° / 46°	
Seoul	Sunny	27° / 14°	
Tokyo	Mostly Sunny	46° / 34°	
Washington, DC	Partly Cloudy	46° / 34°	

TIDES: SAIPAN HARBOR TODAY			FEET
12:56 AM	Low Tide	-0.49	
8:07 AM	High Tide	1.68	
1:11 PM	Low Tide	1.10	
6:08 PM	High Tide	1.74	

FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF OCTOBER 30, 2023

DEPARTURES				ARRIVALS			
SAIPAN-GUAM (GUM)				GUAM (GUM)-SAIPAN			
UA076	9:50AM	10:30AM	Daily	UA174	8:00AM	8:45AM	Daily
SAIPAN- NARITA (NRT)				NARITA (NRT)-SAIPAN			
UA824	7:05AM	9:45AM	1, 3, 5	UA825	9:25PM	2:00AM+1	2, 4, 7
GUAM-MANILA (MNL)				MANILA (MNL)-GUAM			
PR 111	5:55AM	7:55AM	Daily	UA189	00:40AM	6:30AM	3, 6
UA193	7:50PM	11:50PM	2, 5 via Palau	PR110	10:05PM	3:55AM+1	Daily
UA183	7:55PM	9:50PM	Daily	UA192	10:40PM	6:30AM+1	2, 5 via Palau
				UA184	10:55PM	4:45AM+1	1, 3, 4, 6, 7
SAIPAN-MANILA (MNL)				MANILA (MNL)-SAIPAN			
7C3403/2305	4:40AM	10:20PM	Daily	UA189/174	00:40AM	8:45AM+1	3, 6 via Guam
UA076/183	9:50AM	9:50PM	Daily via Guam	UA192/174	10:40PM	8:45AM+1	2, 5 via Palau, Guam
UA076/193	9:50AM	11:50PM	2, 5 via Guam, Palau	UA184/174	10:55PM	8:45AM+1	1, 3, 4, 6, 7 via Guam
				7C2306/3406	11:15PM	3:30PM+1	Daily
SAIPAN-INCHEON (ICN)				INCHEON (ICN)-SAIPAN			
TW308	2:15AM	6:10AM	Daily	7C3406	10:10AM	3:30PM	Daily
7C3403	4:40AM	8:35AM	Daily	TW307	7:45PM	1:15AM+1	Daily
7C3405	4:35PM	8:25PM	Daily	7C3404	10:15PM	3:35AM+1	Daily

LEGEND: Days: Monday (1), Tuesday (2), Wednesday (3), Thursday (4), Friday (5), Saturday (6) and Sunday (7); UA United Airlines; PR, Philippine Airlines; TW, T'Way Air; OZ, Asiana Airlines; 7C, Jeju Air; BX, Air Busan • ETD: Estimated Time of Departure; ETA: Estimated Time of Arrival. *(The Saipan Tribune is not responsible for any changes in the schedule.)*

STAR MARIANAS AIR, INC.

FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF OCTOBER 30, 2023

SAIPAN TO ROTA					
FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
1301	SAIPAN	ROTA	08:30	09:00	Oct 21-31, 2023
1302	SAIPAN	ROTA	10:30	11:00	Daily
1303	SAIPAN	ROTA	15:30	16:00	Daily
ROTA TO SAIPAN					
FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
3101	ROTA	SAIPAN	9:30	10:00	Oct 21-31, 2023
3102	ROTA	SAIPAN	11:30	12:00	Saturday & Sunday
3103	ROTA	SAIPAN	13:30	14:00	Monday To Friday
3104	ROTA	SAIPAN	16:30	17:00	Daily
ROTA TO GUAM					
FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
3401	ROTA	GUAM	11:30	12:00	Monday To Friday
GUAM TO ROTA					
FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
4301	GUAM	ROTA	12:30	13:00	Monday To Friday
SAIPAN TO TINIAN					
FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
1201	SAIPAN	TINIAN	7:30	7:45	Daily
1202	SAIPAN	TINIAN	8:00	8:15	Daily
1203	SAIPAN	TINIAN	9:00	9:15	Daily
1204	SAIPAN	TINIAN	10:00	10:15	Daily
1206	SAIPAN	TINIAN	15:00	15:15	Daily
1207	SAIPAN	TINIAN	16:00	16:15	Daily
1208	SAIPAN	TINIAN	17:00	17:15	Daily
TINIAN TO SAIPAN					
FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
2101	TINIAN	SAIPAN	8:00	8:15	Daily
2102	TINIAN	SAIPAN	8:30	8:45	Daily
2103	TINIAN	SAIPAN	9:30	9:45	Daily
2104	TINIAN	SAIPAN	10:30	10:45	Daily
2106	TINIAN	SAIPAN	15:30	15:45	Daily
2107	TINIAN	SAIPAN	16:30	16:45	Daily
2108	TINIAN	SAIPAN	17:30	17:45	Daily

NEWS DESK For news tips, corrections and requests for news coverage, call (670) 235-NEWS (6397), 235-2440, fax 235.3740. E-mail: editor@saipantribune.com. Website:www.saipantribune.com.

CUSTOMER SERVICE For inquiries, purchase of back issues and complaints, call (670) 235-8747, 235-2440, fax 235-3740.

SUBSCRIPTION Published Monday to Friday, Saipan Tribune offers door-to-door on-island delivery at an annual rate of \$180. For additional subscription information, call (670) 235-8747 or 235-2769, or fax 235-3740.

ADVERTISING For inquiries contact (670) 235-2769. E-mail: sales@saipantribune.com

Business

BIDEN'S 2024 DILEMMA

US economy looks solid, but voters still not feeling it

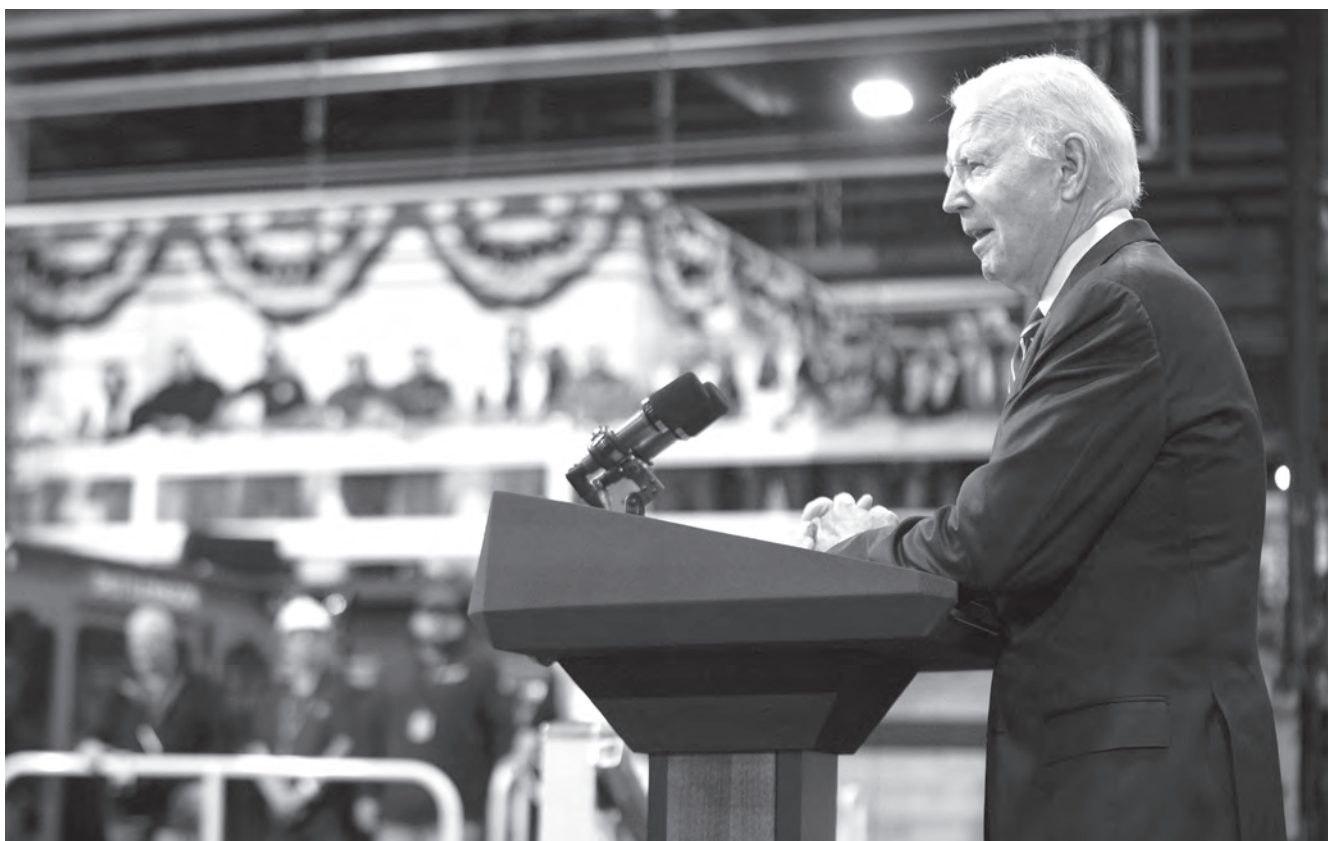
WASHINGTON (AP)—President Joe Biden goes into next year's election with a vexing challenge: Just as the U.S. economy is getting stronger, people are still feeling horrible about it.

Pollsters and economists say there has never been as wide a gap between the underlying health of the economy and public perception. The divergence could be a decisive factor in whether the Democrat secures a second term next year. Republicans are seizing on the dissatisfaction to skewer Biden, while the White House is finding less success as it tries to highlight economic progress.

"Things are getting better and people think things are going to get worse—and that's the most dangerous piece of this," said Democratic pollster Celinda Lake, who has worked with Biden. Lake said voters no longer want to just see inflation rates fall—rather, they want an outright decline in prices, something that last happened on a large scale during the Great Depression.

"Honestly, I'm kind of mystified by it," she said.

By many measures, the U.S. economy is rock solid. Friday's employment report showed that employers added 199,000 jobs in November and the unemployment rate dropped to 3.7%. Inflation has plummeted in little over a year from a troubling 9.1% to 3.2% without causing a recession—a phenomenon that some once skeptical economists have dubbed "immaculate."



President Joe Biden speaks at the Amtrak Bear Maintenance Facility, Monday, Nov. 6, 2023, in Bear, Del.

Yet people remain dejected about the economy, according to the University of Michigan's Index of Consumer Sentiment. The preliminary December figures issued Friday showed a jump in sentiment as people seem to recognize that inflation is cooling. But the index is still slightly below its July level.

In a possible warning sign for Biden, people surveyed for the index brought up the 2024 election. Sentiment rose dramatically more among Republicans than Democrats, potentially suggesting that

GOP voters became more optimistic about winning back the White House.

"Consumers have been feeling broadly uneasy about the economy since the pandemic, and they are still coming to grips with the notion that we are not returning to the pre-pandemic 'normal,'" Joanne Hsu, director and chief economist of the survey, said of the overall trend in recent months.

Jared Bernstein, chair of the White House Council of Economic Advisers, stressed that a strong underlying economy

is "absolutely necessary" to eventually lifting consumer sentiment. His argument is that as the economy continues to improve, more people will recognize the benefits and sentiment will improve.

"We've got to keep fighting to lower costs and build on the progress that we've made," Bernstein said. "We just need more time to get these gains to working Americans—that's our plan."

The White House has made three major shifts in its messaging in hopes of build-

ing up confidence in Biden's economic leadership. The president this summer began to pepper his speeches with the term "Bidenomics" to describe his policies, only to

have Republicans latch onto the word as a point of attack.

White House officials have pointed out specific items for which prices have fallen outright. They noted lower prices for turkeys during Thanksgiving as well as for eggs. Biden repeatedly emphasizes that he lowered insulin costs for Medicare participants, while other officials discuss how gasoline prices have dropped from their peak.

Second, Biden recently started to blame inflation on corporations that hiked prices when they saw an opportunity to improve their profits, bringing more prominence to an argument first used when gasoline prices spiked. The president's argument is suspicious to many economists, yet the intended message to voters is that Biden is fighting for them against those he blames for fueling inflation.

"Let me be clear: Any corporation that is not passing these savings on to the consumers needs to stop their price gouging," Biden said recently in Pueblo, Colorado. "The American people are tired of being played for suckers."

Holiday crowds at airports, on highways expected to be even bigger than last year

More Americans are expected to fly or drive far from home over Christmas than did last year, putting a cap on a busy year for travel.

Auto club AAA forecast Monday that 115.2 million people will go 50 miles or more from home during the 10 days between Dec. 23 and New Year's Day. That's 2.2% more than AAA predicted during the comparable stretch last year.

"That desire to get away is stronger than we have seen in a very long time," said AAA spokeswoman Aixa Diaz. "People are willing to adjust their budgets in other areas of their life, but they want to keep traveling."

The AAA predicts that the holiday season will still fall 3% short of record travel in 2019, the last Christmas before COVID-19 hit the United States.

That might seem conservative—air travel has already rebounded and is surpassing 2019 levels.

The number of travelers going through U.S. airport checkpoints is up 12.4% over last year and 1.4% higher than in 2019, according to the Transportation Security Administration. Travel around the Thanksgiving Day

holiday topped 2019 numbers.

Travel is strong even though many Americans say they are worried about the economy. In an AP-NORC poll last week, seven out of 10 people surveyed rated the economy as poor. But at least inflation has cooled off a bit.

Airline passengers are getting a slight break from last year's high prices. Average fares in October were 13% lower than a year earlier, according to the government's latest data.

AAA predicts that 7.5 million people will fly in the U.S. in late December, but the club expects far more—nearly 104 million—to drive over the holidays.

Motorists will pay a bit less to fill up. The national average price for a gallon of gasoline was \$3.19 at the end of last week, compared with \$3.33 a year earlier, according to AAA. Gas is under \$3 a gallon across a swath in the middle of the country.

Travel for Christmas and New Year's is spread out over a couple weeks, so the busiest days rarely match the Thanksgiving peaks—TSA counted a record 2.9 million air travelers on the Sunday after the November holiday.

EU wants to put a tax on emissions from imports

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP)—A European Union plan to tax the carbon pollution emitted to make goods imported from countries like India and China has sparked a debate at the United Nations climate conference in Dubai, as poorer countries fear such tariffs will harm livelihoods and economic growth.

Through the tax, the EU hopes to set a price on the carbon emitted to make energy-intensive products like iron, steel, cement, fertilizer and aluminum in other countries. The aim is to both reduce emissions from imports and create a level-playing field for goods made in the European bloc that must meet stricter green standards.

The issue strikes at a core dilemma that policymakers are grappling with—and haggling over—at the COP28 climate conference in Dubai: How to

get the world to go greener without upending more-fragile developing economies.

Developing countries are worried that the tax under the EU's planned Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism would harm their economies and make it too expensive to trade with the bloc.

"CBAM's sole aim is to prevent carbon leakage" elsewhere in the supply chain, European Commissioner for Climate Action Wopke Hoekstra told reporters at the COP28 conference. He said the tax is crucial for funding and achieving the EU's climate goal of slashing emissions 55% by 2030.

A recent study by the U.N. Conference on Trade and Development found that a tax of \$44 per ton of carbon emitted would slash pollution from the supply chain by half. It also estimated that rich countries

would make \$2.5 billion from the tax, but poorer countries might lose up to \$5.9 billion.

Others in wealthier countries including Britain, Canada and the United States are looking to follow suit.

Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse of Rhode Island and Rep. Suzan DelBene of Washington, both Democrats, on Wednesday reintroduced legislation to create the "Clean Competition Act" that would similarly set a fee on imports from high-carbon emitting producers.

Whitehouse, at a panel event Sunday at COP28, praised CBAM as "the brightest star in terms of emissions reduction in our firmament right now."

"This bill is the effort to do our piece of creating that international carbon pricing regime," he said, expressing hopes to cut through "a blockade of fossil-fuel dark money

and influence in Congress."

Responding to the worries in the developing world, Whitehouse said such measures would generate revenues for climate justice and improve the pathway toward "climate safety"—the lack of which would "fall far more heavily on the people in the economies and the countries that have fewest resources."

"I have zero remorse about CBAM from a climate justice point of view," he said, insisting that his legislation would both grant exemptions to the least-developed countries and focus on the worst polluters in any given industry.

India's government is one of those strongly opposed to the idea. Former steel secretary Aruna Sharma has urged the government in New Delhi to continue to oppose the tax, but said industries do need to invest in lowering their carbon footprint for both exports and domestic goods.

Nation

Biden, Congress mulling big changes on immigration

WASHINGTON (AP)—President Joe Biden is taking a more active role in Senate negotiations over changes to the immigration system that Republicans are demanding in exchange for providing money to Ukraine in its fight against Russia and Israel for the war with Hamas.

The Democratic president has said he is willing to make “significant compromises on the border” as Republicans block the wartime aid in Congress. The White House is expected to get more involved in talks this week as the impasse over changes to border policy has deepened and the funds remaining for Ukraine have dwindled.

“It’s time to cut a deal that both sides can agree to,” Biden’s budget director, Shalanda Young, said Sunday on CBS’ “Face the Nation.”

Republicans say the record numbers of migrants crossing the southern border pose a security threat because authorities cannot adequately screen all the migrants and that those who enter the United States are straining the country’s resources. GOP lawmakers also say they cannot justify to their constituents sending billions of dollars to other countries, even in a time of war, while failing to address the border at home.

Republican Sen. James



President Joe Biden talks with U.S. Border Patrol agents as they walk along a stretch of the U.S.-Mexico border in El Paso Texas, Sunday, Jan. 8, 2023.

Lankford of Oklahoma, who is leading the negotiations, pointed to the surge of people entering the U.S. from Mexico and said “it is literally spiraling out of control.”

“All we’re trying to do is to say what tools are needed to be able to get this back in control, so we don’t have the chaos on our southern border,” Lankford said on CBS.

But many immigration advocates, including some Democrats, say some of the changes

being proposed would gut protections for people who desperately need help and would not really ease the chaos at the border.

Connecticut Sen. Chris Murphy, the top Democratic bargainer, said the White House would take a more active role in the talks. But he also panned Republican policy demands so far as “unreasonable.”

“We don’t want to shut off the United States of America to people who are coming

here to be rescued from dangerous, miserable circumstances, in which their life is in jeopardy. The best of America is that you can come here to be rescued from terror and torture,” Murphy said on NBC’s “Meet the Press.”

Much of the negotiating is taking place in private, but some of the issues under discussion are known: asylum standards, humanitarian parole and fast-track deportation authority, among others.

A look at what they are and what might happen if there are changes:

HUMANITARIAN PAROLE

Using humanitarian parole, the U.S. government can let people into the country by essentially bypassing the regular immigration process. This power is supposed to be used on a case-by-case basis for “urgent humanitarian reasons” or “significant public benefit.” Migrants are usually admitted for a predetermined period and there’s no path toward U.S. citizenship.

Over the years, administrations, both Democratic and Republican, have used humanitarian parole to admit people into the U.S. and help groups of people from all over the world. It’s been used to admit people from Hungary in the 1950s, from Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos during the latter half of the 1970s, and Iraqi Kurds who had worked with the U.S. in the mid-1990s, according to research by the Cato Institute.

Under Biden, the U.S. has relied heavily on humanitarian parole. The U.S. airlifted nearly 80,000 Afghans from Kabul, the capital of Afghanistan, and brought them to the U.S. after the Taliban takeover. The U.S. has admitted tens of thousands of Ukrainians who fled after the Russian invasion.

In January the Democratic administration announced a plan to admit 30,000 people a month from Cuba, Haiti, Nicaragua and Venezuela via humanitarian parole, provided those migrants had a financial sponsor and flew to the U.S. instead of going to the U.S.-Mexico border for entry.

The latest U.S. government figures show that nearly 270,000 people had been admit-

ted into the country through October under that program. Separately, 324,000 people have gotten appointments through a mobile app called CBP One that is used to grant parole to people at land crossings with Mexico.

Republicans have described the programs as essentially an end run around Congress by letting in large numbers of people who otherwise would have no path to be admitted. Texas sued the administration to stop the program aimed at Cubans, Haitians, Nicaraguans and Venezuelans.

WHAT MIGHT CHANGE WITH ASYLUM?

Asylum is a type of protection that allows a migrant to stay in the U.S. and have a path to American citizenship. To qualify for asylum, someone has to demonstrate fear of persecution back home due to a fairly specific set of criteria: race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group or political opinions. Asylum-seekers must be on U.S. soil when they ask for this protection.

They generally go through an initial screening called a credible fear interview. If they are determined to have a chance of getting asylum, they are allowed to stay in the U.S. to pursue their case in immigration court. That process can take years. In the meantime, asylum-seekers can start to work, get married, have children and create a life.

Critics say the problem is that most people do not end up getting asylum when their case finally makes it to immigration court. But they say migrants know that if they claim asylum, they essentially will be allowed to stay in America for years.

“People aren’t necessarily coming to apply for asylum as much to access that asylum adjudication process,” said Andrew Arthur, a former immigration court judge and fellow at the Center for Immigration Studies, which advocates for less immigration in the U.S.

Some of what lawmakers are discussing would raise the bar that migrants need to meet during that initial credible fear interview. Those who do not meet it would be sent home.

But Paul Schmidt, a retired immigration court judge who blogs about immigration court issues, said the credible fear interview was never intended to be so tough. Migrants are doing the interview soon after arriving at the border from an often arduous and traumatizing journey, he said. Schmidt said the interview is more of an “initial screening” to weed out those with frivolous asylum claims.

Trump says he won't testify again at his NY fraud trial

NEW YORK (AP)—Donald Trump said Sunday he has decided against testifying for a second time at his New York civil fraud trial, posting on social media a day before his scheduled appearance that he “very successfully & conclusively” testified last month and saw no need to do so again.

The former president, the leading contender for the 2024 Republican nomination, had been expected to return to the witness stand Monday as a coda to his defense against New York Attorney General Letitia James’ lawsuit.

James, a Democrat, alleges Trump inflated his wealth on financial statements used in securing loans and making deals. The case threatens Trump’s real estate empire and cuts to the heart of his image as a successful businessman.

“I will not be testifying on Monday,” Trump wrote in an all-capital-letters, multipart statement on his Truth Social platform less than 20 hours before he was to take the witness stand.

“I have already testified to everything & have nothing

more to say,” Trump added, leaving the final word among defense witnesses to an accounting expert hired by his legal team who testified last week that he found “no evidence, whatsoever, for any accounting fraud” in Trump’s financial statements.

A Trump spokesperson did not immediately respond to questions about his decision.

The decision was an abrupt change from Trump’s posture in recent days, when his lawyers said he was insisting on testifying again despite their concerns about a gag order that has cost him \$15,000 in fines for disparaging the judge’s law clerk.

“President Trump has already testified. There is really nothing more to say to a judge who has imposed an unconstitutional gag order and thus far appears to have ignored President Trump’s testimony and that of everyone else involved in the complex financial transactions at issue in the case,” Trump lawyer Christopher Kise said Sunday.

Trump’s decision came days after his son, Eric Trump, ditched his return appearance on the witness stand. Trump said

on social media that he’d told Eric to cancel.

It also follows Trump’s first trip back to court since he testified in the case on Nov. 6. Last Thursday, he watched from the defense table as the accounting professor, New York University professor Eli Bartov, blasted the state’s case and said Trump’s financial statements “were not materially misstated.”

Trump’s cancellation caught court officials by surprise. Without Trump on the witness stand, the trial will be on hold until Tuesday, when Bartov will finish his testimony. State lawyers say they’ll then call at least one rebuttal witness.

In a statement, James said whether Trump testified again or not, “we have already proven that he committed years of financial fraud and unjustly enriched himself and his family. No matter how much he tries to distract from reality, the facts don’t lie.”

Trump was often defiant and combative when he testified Nov. 6. Along with defending his wealth and denying wrongdoing, he repeatedly sparred with the judge, whom

he criticized as “extremely hostile,” and slammed James as “a political hack.”

Trump answered questions from state lawyers for about 3½ hours, often responding with lengthy diatribes. His verbose answers irked the judge, Arthur Engoron, who admonished, “This is not a political rally.”

Had Trump returned to the stand Monday, it would’ve been his defense lawyers leading the questioning, but lawyers from James’ office could have cross-examined him, too.

Engoron ruled before the trial that Trump and other defendants engaged in fraud. He ordered that a receiver take control of some Trump properties, but an appeals court has paused that decision.

Engoron is now considering six other claims, including allegations of conspiracy and insurance fraud. James seeks penalties of more than \$300 million and wants Trump banned from doing business in New York. The judge is deciding, rather than a jury, because juries aren’t allowed in this type of case.

Asia



ASIAN BRIEFS

Tibetans in exile accuse China of destroying their identity in Tibet under its rule

DHARAMSHALA, India (AP)—The president of the Tibetan government-in-exile on Sunday accused China of denying the most fundamental human rights to people in Tibet and vigorously carrying out the extermination of the Tibetan identity. Penpa Tsering, in a statement marking Human Rights Day, also took exception to China last month releasing a “white paper”—or policy document—on Tibet. China claimed that its rule of Tibet marked “outstanding achievements in development, created on the roof of the world through the Chinese path to modernization.” The report extolled progress in economic development, social stability and environmental protection under Communist Party rule. China has built highways and high-speed railways through the mountainous region and promoted tourism as a way to boost incomes. Tsering said the Chinese Communist Party was “forging a strong sense of the Chinese national as one single community, promoting the Chinese language, the Sinicization of Tibetan Buddhism and developing socialist values.” “Such infliction of suffering and oppression on the Tibetan people by the Chinese Communist Party authorities is unparalleled and unprecedented,” he said. Tsering addressed a group of Tibetans at the Tsuglakhang temple in Dharamshala, the headquarters of the Tibetan government-in-exile in northern India, on the 34th anniversary of the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to Tibetan spiritual leader the Dalai Lama. Tibetan schoolchildren and artists performed dances at the cultural event. Tsering also said there has been a sharp increase in the appointment of Chinese officials in the Tibetan areas. The Dalai Lama, 88, has made the Indian hillside town of Dharamshala his headquarters since fleeing from Tibet after a failed uprising against Chinese rule in 1959. India considers Tibet to be part of China, though it hosts the Tibetan exiles. The Dalai Lama denies China's claim that he is a separatist and says he only advocates substantial autonomy and protection of Tibet's native Buddhist culture.

Divers recover seventh of 8 crew members killed in crash of US military Osprey off Japan

TOKYO (AP)—Divers on Sunday recovered the remains of the seventh of the eight crew members from a U.S. military Osprey aircraft that crashed off southern Japan during a training mission.

The Air Force CV-22 Osprey went down Nov. 29 just off Yakushima Island in southwestern Japan while on its way to Okinawa. The bodies of six of the crew had since been recovered, including five from the sunken wreckage of the aircraft. The U.S. Air Force Special Operations Command said in a statement that the body found by Air Force divers was one of the two crew members still missing. The identity of the airman had been determined but the information was being withheld until next of kin could be notified, the command said. “Currently there is a combined effort in locating and recovering the remains of our eighth airman,” it said. A week after the crash and repeated reminders from the Japanese government about safety concerns, the U.S. military grounded all its Osprey V-22 aircraft after a preliminary investigation indicated something went wrong with the craft that was not a human error. The U.S.-made Osprey is a hybrid aircraft that takes off and lands like a helicopter but can rotate its propellers forward and cruise much faster, like an airplane, during flight. The crash raised new questions about the safety of the Osprey, which has been involved in multiple fatal accidents over its relatively short time in service. Japan grounded its fleet of 14 Ospreys after the crash. Japanese defense officials say Ospreys are key to the country's military buildup especially in southwestern Japan, in the face of a growing threat from China. But the crash has rekindled worries and public protests in areas where additional Osprey deployment is planned. Japanese residents and media have criticized Japan's government for not pushing hard enough to get Ospreys grounded sooner or gain access to information about the crash.

PH military chief

voices anger after latest Chinese coast guard incident in South China Sea

MANILA, Philippines (AP)—The Philippine military chief said Monday he was with Filipino forces aboard a supply boat when it was blasted with a water cannon and surrounded and bumped by Chinese coast guard ships over the weekend in the disputed South China Sea. Gen. Romeo Brawner Jr. told The Associated Press in a telephone interview that China was escalating its aggression in the contested waters but said it would not deter Filipino forces from defending the Philippines' territorial interests in the busy waterway. More than 100 Chinese government and suspected militia ships have swarmed the high seas around the contested Scarborough Shoal, where a long-marooned Philippine navy ship that Brawner visited has stood for decades. He said the Chinese flotilla was much bigger than in previous months. “It's pure aggression,” Brawner said of China's high-seas maneuvers. “I witnessed how many times the big Chinese coast guard and militia ships cut our path. They water-cannoned us, then bumped us. It's angering.” “This really needs a diplomatic solution at the higher level,” he said, but added that the Philippine “armed forces will continue our mission because it is lawful and it's our obligation to bring supplies to our troops in the frontlines, and it's our obligation to protect our fishermen.” Brawner, the U.S.-educated chief of the 150,000-member Armed Forces of the Philippines, joined navy personnel in a wooden-hulled supply boat, the Unnaiza Mae 1, which brought Christmas gifts, food and other supplies to a small contingent of Filipino marines and navy personnel stationed aboard the BRP Sierra Madre at the Second Thomas Shoal. Although now crumbling with rust and holes, the slightly listing BRP Sierra Madre remains an actively commissioned Philippine navy ship, meaning any assault on it would be considered an act of war. It has become a fragile symbol of the territorial claims of the Philippines in the strategic waterway, which China claims virtually in its entirety.

World

Israel indicates willingness to fight for months to beat Hamas



Israeli troops are seen near the Gaza Strip border, in southern Israel on Sunday, Dec. 10, 2023. AP

DEIR AL-BALAH, Gaza Strip

(AP)—Battles raged across Gaza on Sunday as Israel indicated it was prepared to fight for months or longer to defeat the territory's Hamas rulers, and a key mediator said willingness to discuss a cease-fire was fading.

Israel faces international outrage after its military offensive, with diplomatic support and arms from close ally the United States, has killed thousands of Palestinian civilians. About 90% of Gaza's 2.3 million people have been displaced within the besieged territory, where U.N. agencies say there is no safe place to flee.

The United States has lent vital support in recent days by vetoing a United Nations Security Council resolution to end the fighting and pushing through an emergency sale of over \$100 million worth of tank ammunition to Israel.

Russia backed the resolution. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Sunday spoke to Russian President Vladimir Putin and expressed dissatisfaction with “anti-Israel positions” taken by Moscow's envoys at the U.N. and elsewhere, an

Israeli statement said.

Netanyahu told Putin that any country assaulted the way Israel was “would have reacted with no less force than Israel is using,” the statement added.

The U.N. General Assembly scheduled an emergency meeting Tuesday to vote on a draft resolution demanding an immediate humanitarian ceasefire in Gaza. Riyadh Mansour, the Palestinian ambassador to the U.N., told The Associated Press that it's similar to the Security Council resolution the U.S. vetoed Friday.

There are no vetoes in the General Assembly but unlike the Security Council its resolutions are not legally binding. They are important nonetheless as a barometer of global opinion.

Israel's air and ground war has killed thousands of Palestinians, mostly civilians, since the Oct. 7 attack by Hamas and other militants killed 1,200 people and captured around 240. Over 100 of them were released during a weeklong cease-fire last month.

With very little aid allowed in, Palestinians face severe shortages of food, water and

other basic goods. Some observers openly worry that Palestinians will be forced out of Gaza altogether.

“Expect public order to completely break down soon, and an even worse situation could unfold including epidemic diseases and increased pressure for mass displacement into Egypt,” U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres told a forum in Qatar, a key intermediary.

Eylon Levy, an Israeli government spokesman, called allegations of mass displacement from Gaza “outrageous and false.”

Qatar's prime minister, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, told the forum that mediation efforts seeking to stop the war and have all hostages released will continue, but “unfortunately, we are not seeing the same willingness that we had seen in the weeks before.”

Israel's national security adviser, Tzachi Hanegbi, told Israel's Channel 12 TV that the U.S. has set no deadline for Israel to achieve its goals. “The evaluation that this can't be measured in weeks is correct, and I'm not sure it can be measured in months,” he said.

Explosions heard in Kyiv in possible air attack; no word on damage or casualties

KYIV, Ukraine (AP)—A series of loud explosions rang out in Ukraine's capital early Monday followed by air raid sirens.

There was no immediate word on the origin of the explosions, but they sounded like air defense units firing into the sky.

Kyiv is routinely targeted by Russian drone and missile attacks.

Just over two weeks ago, Kyiv came under what Ukrainian officials said was the most intense drone attack since the beginning of Russia's full-scale invasion in 2022.

Ukraine's air force said

Russia launched 75 Iranian-made Shahed drones against the capital, of which 74 were destroyed by air defenses.

The explosions Monday occurred just after 4 a.m. as the city was under its nightly curfew. There was no immediate information on any damage or casualties.

Overdrive

Family Thanksgiving in the 3-row Acura MDX Type S

By HENRY PAYNE
The Detroit News

Dinner in Motown, Wings game, paddle tennis, shopping, Bocce ball, dinner, snow, snow and let it snow. Just your typical jam-packed Thanksgiving weekend for the Payne family six-pack of mom, dad, two boys and their wives.

Good thing we had a three-row, six-seat SUV to negotiate it all.

This week's test mule was a 2024 Acura MDX SH-AWD Type S, the halo model in the brand's lineup now that the NSX supercar has been retired. Gone but not forgotten. Though the second-generation hybrid NSX didn't achieve the critical (or sales) acclaim of the original 1989 NSX (blessed by the legendary F1 star Ayrton Senna himself), it inspired a new generation of Acura interiors.

The NSX's unique trigger shifter 'n' Drive Mode dial is replicated in the MDX, and I rotated the dial to SPORT mode as we entered an S-turn in Oakland County. The V6-fired MDX has also inherited the NSX's sporty DNA, and the mid-size ute is surprisingly nimble through the twisties. I flicked the MDX left then right, followed by generous throttle on exit onto an uphill straightaway.

"VRRROOM!" growled the 355 horses up front.

"HEEEYYY!" came the cry from the third row.

"Yes, yes. Just having a little fun!" I protested. "Not bad for a three-row family SUV, yes?" With that I got universal agreement, and I settled back into my primary duties: chauffeuring the family to a downtown Red Wings game.

The MDX's red leather interior—available on all Acura models—not only matched our Wings-colored shirts and sweaters, but drew high praise from the family. Especially my son, Henry, who owns a similarly equipped Mazda3 Turbo. Red is rad and Acura makes good use of it through-



HENRY PAYNE/THE DETROIT NEWS/TNS
You can opt for red leather in the 2024 Acura MDX Type S Advanced.



HENRY PAYNE/THE DETROIT NEWS/TNS
The 2024 Acura MDX Type S Advanced escorted the Payne family on a variety of Thanksgiving outings. This is the Palazzo di Bocce in Auburn Hills, Michigan, home of the sport, Bocce Ball.

NUTS & BOLTS

- **Vehicle type:** Front-engine, all-wheel-drive five-passenger SUV
- **Price:** \$51,045 including \$1,195 destination fee (\$75,296 Type S Advance model as tested)
- **Powerplant:** 3.5-liter V-6; 3.0-liter turbocharged V-6
- **Power:** 290 horsepower, 267 pound-feet torque (V-6); 355 horsepower, 354 pound-feet torque (turbo V-6)
- **Transmission:** 10-speed automatic
- **Weight:** 4,741 pounds (Type S as tested)
- **Performance:** 0-60 mph, 5.5 seconds (Car and Driver); 5,000 pounds
- **Fuel economy:** EPA est. mpg: 19 city/25 highway/21 combined (AWD V-6); 17 city/21 highway/19 combined (AWD turbo V-6)
- **Report card**
- **Highs:** Nimble handling for a big SUV; easy third-row access
- **Lows:** Crowded console; tight third row
- **Overall:** ★ ★ ★

out its lineup.

Picking straws for who got to sit in the third row was less popular. Competitors Mazda CX-90, Jeep Grand Cherokee L and Infiniti QX60 boast three rows that are so roomy that, at 6'5", I can sit behind myself sitting behind myself in the last row. Impressive. Not so the MDX, where I would have to remove my legs to sit in the back. In the MDX, the third row requires planning on who sits there.

Be sure to put your smallest passenger in the back—in our case, my 5'5" wife and daughter-in-law Erica. Once seated, they felt a bit claustrophobic—which is where the MDX's ambidextrous second-row middle seat

comes to the rescue.

Honda brands have always been creative with seats (see the ridiculously capable Magic Seat in the late Honda Fit), and the MDX is no different. Check out the cool middle seat. If we had seven in our party—say a grandchild—then we would have utilized it. But with just two in the middle row, we folded the middle seat back down—exposing twin cupholders for use between the occupants. Or you can just remove the middle seat entirely with a pull on the strap poking out from the base, creating a middle aisle for the third-row passengers.

Our crew opted for the cupholder option—which also opened a sightline for the third-row gals. Together with the panoramic roof, it kept claustrophobia at bay.

The Type S is stuffed like a turkey with the latest equipment—blind-spot assist, adaptive cruise control, head-up display—all of which I used liberally on our Lodge commute to the game.

Some would say overstuffed.

In addition to the trigger shifter and fat Drive Mode

knob, Acura also decided to innovate a console mousepad on the MDX, complete with hand-rest to steady your fingers during operation. The effect is inefficient console space once you include a phone charger (which sits below the mouse hand-rest) and cupholders. The MDX would be better off with a good ol' touchscreen.

Or, for those who prefer BMW-like remotely-operated screens, the latest Mazda CX-90's rotary dial is more intuitive. Indeed, the MDX's luxury play—Bimmer X5-like nimble-handling but for \$15K less—has been eclipsed by the larger, lovelier Mazda's even more ambitious premium proposition: BMW-like, inline-6 cylinder wrapped in an athletic chassis and lush interior for 10 grand less than the Acura. Zoom zoom.

Truck-based three-row cruise ships like the Cadillac Escalads and Lincoln Navigator may have more interior room than the MDX, but I didn't envy them parking downtown in tight lots for the game. We entered a jammed surface lot adjacent to Little Caesars Arena, parked effortlessly and were on our way to dinner.

The arena doesn't allow purses inside (what th-?) and Mrs. Payne was thankful for the MDX's clever sub-storage under the rear cargo floor, where she stowed her bag.

That cargo space is also big enough to pick up four people at the airport with four carry-on bags (fold one of the third-row seats down, seat three people in the second row), or pack with gifts after a big day at the mall.

For all their interior room, three-row utes can often be intimidating to drive given their size and ample blind spots.

But on the way back from a spirited game of Bocce ball in Auburn Hills, my daughter-in-law Amanda warmed quickly to the Acura's tight handling and spirited engine.

She merged with authority onto I-75, was impressed by the big ute's tight chassis, then

set adaptive cruise control to 80 mph to create a cocoon around her. Her review didn't include snow, but after the family had taken to the friendly skies Saturday to return to Seattle and New Jersey, the heavens buried us with snowflakes on Sunday.

Can I use new oil in an old car?

MOTORMOUTH
BY BOB WEBER

Tribune News Service



Bob Weber is a writer and mechanic who became an ASE-certified Master Automobile Technician in 1976. Weber's work has appeared in professional trade magazines and various consumer publications including Consumer Guide and Consumers Digest. Send questions along with name and town to motormouth.tribune@gmail.com.

Q: I have retained the old family Buick LeSabre that my father bought new in 1973. It's been a garage queen and has only 44,000 miles. I've been told that engines made prior to 1992 require additives that are no longer in today's motor oil and these were taken out because they didn't react well with catalytic converters. Running the old engines with these new oils will cause significant damage. What do you suggest?

W.D., Lexington, Kentucky

A: Every new iteration of motor oil is backward compatible with all older vehicles. Your Buick most likely required American Petroleum Institute (API) service category SE. The most current category is SP. Yes, you can use the latest oil in your classic Buick.

■ ■ ■

Q: I own a 2006 Hyundai Sonata that I bought new. It now has 131,000 miles on it. This vehicle has been mostly trouble-free. It still has the original Hyundai battery that has never failed since I bought the car. Every person that has serviced this vehicle has been telling me for the last few years now that I should have it replaced just because batteries don't last this long. (Now 18 years.) What is your opinion? Maybe this is an exceptional battery that should go in the Guinness book of records.

P.K., Zimmerman, Minnesota

A: I have never seen a car battery last that long.

■ ■ ■

Q: We have a 2009 Toyota Venza. The headlight lenses seem to be cloudy causing the lights to be dimmer. Is the issue with the inside or the outside of the lens? Please let me know the best way to clean them up.

S.B., Tinley Park, Illinois

A: It is on the outside. There must be a million headlight lens restoration products out there. Most of them require you to sand off the cloudy haze in stages using increasingly finer grits. I can't speak for all of them, but I have used Sylvania and Turtle Wax brands with good results.

■ ■ ■

Q: Do you recommend a portable battery jumper pack to jump a dead battery instead of using the old-fashioned jumper cables? My concern is that today's cars have so many computer chips in them that you run the risk of damaging the electronics in either the car being jumped or the car doing the jumping.

T.M., Arlington Heights, Illinois

A: I still have a set of jumper cables. I just don't remember where I put them. There's a battery pack in the pickup, in our car and in the saddlebag of my motorcycle. They won't damage any circuits or chips. They are safer since you can't reverse the polarity when hooking them up. They take up less space. And you don't have to rely on a good Samaritan to provide a jump.

Life & Style

LA critics' best film of 2023 is 'The Zone of Interest'

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Jonathan Glazer's chilling Auschwitz-set drama, "The Zone of Interest," has been named best movie of the year by the Los Angeles Film Critics Association.

The critics group, which announced its picks late Sunday after a day-long meeting, also awarded prizes for Glazer's directing and Mica Levi's score. It selected Sandra Hüller, who stars in both "The Zone of Interest" and the French courtroom drama "Anatomy of a Fall," for one of its two lead performance awards.

The critics, as they often do, deviated considerably



This image released by A24 shows Sandra Hüller in a scene from "The Zone of Interest."

from their East Coast corollary, the New York Film Critics Circle. That group earlier named Martin Scorsese's "Killers of the Flower Moon" the year's best film.

The Los Angeles Film Critics Association, which doesn't delineate gender in its acting categories, gave all four of its acting awards to women.

In the lead acting category, the winners were Hüller and Emma Stone, the star of Yorgos Lanthimos' "Poor Things." The supporting performance prizes went to Rachel McAdams for the Judy Blume adaptation "Are You There God? It's Me,

Margaret"; and to Da'Vine Joy Randolph, co-star of the boarding school comedy-drama "The Holdovers."

Last year, "Tár" and "Everything Everywhere All at Once" tied for the group's top prize. This year's awards will be handed out in a ceremony on Jan. 13.

Here's a full list of the picks by the Los Angeles Film Critics Association:

- Best Film: "The Zone of Interest"
- Best Director: Jonathan Glazer, "The Zone of Interest"
- Best Lead Performance: Sandra Hüller, "Anatomy of a Fall" and "The Zone of Interest"; and Emma Stone, "Poor Things"
- Best Supporting Performance: Rachel McAdams, "Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret"; and Da'Vine Joy Randolph, "The Holdovers"
- Best Non-English Language Film: "Anatomy of a Fall"
- New Generation Award: Celine Song, "Past Lives"
- Best Screenplay: Andrew Haigh, "All of Us Strangers"
- Best Documentary: "Menus-Plaisirs—Les Troisgros"
- Best Animated Film: "The Boy and the Heron"
- Best Editing: Laurent Sénéchal, "Anatomy of a Fall"
- Best Production Design: Sarah Greenwood, "Barbie"
- Best Score: Mica Levi, "The Zone of Interest," with a recognition also of sound designer Johnnie Burn
- Best Cinematography: Robbie Ryan, "Poor Things"
- Douglas Edwards Experimental Film Prize: "Youth (Spring)"
- Career Achievement Award: Agnieszka Holland

IN A FIRST FOR THE JAPANESE ANIME MASTER

Miyazaki's 'The Boy and the Heron' is No. 1 at box office

NEW YORK (AP)—For the first time in Hayao Miyazaki's decades-spanning career, the 82-year-old Japanese anime master is No. 1 at the North American box office. Miyazaki's latest enchantment, "The Boy and the Heron," debuted with \$12.8 million, according to studio estimates.

"The Boy and the Heron," the long-awaited animated fantasy from the director of "Spirited Away," "My Neighbor Totoro" and other cherished anime classics, is only the third anime to ever top the box office in U.S. and Canadian theaters, and the first original anime to do so. The film, which is playing in both subtitled and dubbed versions, is also the first fully foreign production to land atop the domestic box office this year.

Though Miyazaki's movies have often been enormous hits in Japan and Asia, they've tra-

ditionally made less of a mark in North American cinemas. The director's previous best performer was his last movie, 2013's "The Wind Rises," which grossed \$5.2 million in its entire domestic run.

"It's really a resounding statement for what animation can be," said Eric Beckman, founder and chief executive of GKIDS, the North American distributor for Studio Ghibli films. "American audiences have been ready for a lot more than what they've been getting, and I think this really points to that direction."

"The Boy and the Heron" for years was expected to be Miyazaki's swan song. But just as it was making its premiere at the Toronto International Film Festival in September, Junichi Nishioka, Studio Ghibli vice president, said the previously retired Miyazaki has begun work-

ing toward another film.

"The Boy and the Heron," has been hailed as one of the best films of the year. The film, featuring an English dub voice cast including Robert Pattinson, Christian Bale, Dave Bautista and Mark Hamill, follows a boy who, after her mother perishes in World War II bombing, is led by a mysterious heron to a portal that takes him to a fantastical realm. In Japan, its title translates to "How Do You Live?"

"The Boy and the Heron" earlier collected \$56 million in Japan despite zero promotion. Studio Ghibli opted to release the film without production stills, trailers, ads or billboards.

The U.S. and Canadian release included conventional advertising but was similarly handled with the care of something truly special as a

Miyazaki movie. Throughout this year, all 10 of Miyazaki's films with Ghibli were rereleased in theaters by GKIDS, which was founded in 2008 as way to bring ambitious animation to wider audiences.

"Working on a Hayao Miyazaki film is a huge honor but also kind of terrifying," Beckman said. "We're really just trying to do justice to the film."

Last week's top film, "Renaissance: A Film by Beyoncé," dropped steeply in its second weekend. The concert film, the second pop star release distributed by AMC Theatres following Taylor Swift's "The Eras Tour," collected \$5 million in its second weekend, a decline of 76% from its \$21 million opening.

That allowed Lionsgate's still-going-strong "The Hunger Games: The Ballad of Songbirds & Snakes" to take second place, with an estimated \$9.4 million in its fourth weekend of release. The "Hunger Games" prequel has a domestic haul of \$135.7 million.

- "The Boy and the Heron," \$12.8 million.
- "The Hunger Games: The Ballad of Songbirds & Snakes," \$9.4 million.
- "Godzilla Minus One," \$8.3 million.
- "Trolls Band Together," \$6.2 million.
- "Wish," \$5.3 million.
- "Renaissance, A Film by Beyoncé," \$5 million.
- "Napoleon," \$4.2 million.
- "Waitress: The Musical," \$3.2 million.
- "Animal," \$2.3 million.
- "The Shift," \$2.2 million.

Man cites safety concerns when wife looks to Botox

DEAR ABBY: My wife is a very attractive 56. For years she has wanted Botox treatments. Recently, it has become more serious because she feels she looks like a grandmother. I (and others) continue to tell her how great she looks, especially when she dresses up.

I also tell her Botox is a short-term fix and will require subsequent treatments. Additionally, with each treatment, she will risk potential problems of infection, allergic reaction or medical mistakes. I remind her of the treatments that have gone wrong and that none of those women went to their doctors asking to look like a retired boxer.

At this point, I'm concerned she may be depressed about aging and wants to do something to improve her looks, but I'm standing in her way. I love her just as she is, and I don't want her to do anything that ultimately could do damage. To me, the ultimate "depression" would be doing something harmful that can't be corrected. Please advise me.

LOVES HER THE WAY SHE IS

DEAR LOVES: You clearly adore your wife and want what is best for her. That's why you should consider scheduling a consultation for BOTH of you with a board-certified dermatologist who can explain the benefits and risks of using Botox. It may put some of your concerns to rest.

When administered by a medical professional, there is

little risk of a bad outcome. While you are correct that the effects last only a few months, Botox is popular among women in her age group and those even younger. The only drawback is that it isn't cheap. (During your discussion, you may also want to ask about other products that are available and last longer, such as fillers.)

DEAR ABBY: I let a friend who was going through a hard time stay on my couch when he would get too drunk to drive. Eleven years later, he's still here. I told him from the beginning not to get hooked or fall in love with me, because I knew I would never feel the same.

He has taken over my home with his collections but won't sell anything. He also doesn't pay any bills. I do not like his drinking. I am sober. He yells and screams for sex, but I don't give in. I told him he needs to move on.

I'm on disability and a fixed income. Legal eviction? Restraining order? He has threatened to walk away and leave me to deal with all his junk. Help!

INVADED IN MISSOURI

DEAR INVADED: You have been too kind for far too long. Before doing anything, talk with an attorney because of the length of time you have allowed this person to live with you (rent-free). If you can't afford legal counsel, reach out to your

DEAR ABBY

By Abigail Van Buren
UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE



Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Contact Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

local Legal Aid or Legal Services office.

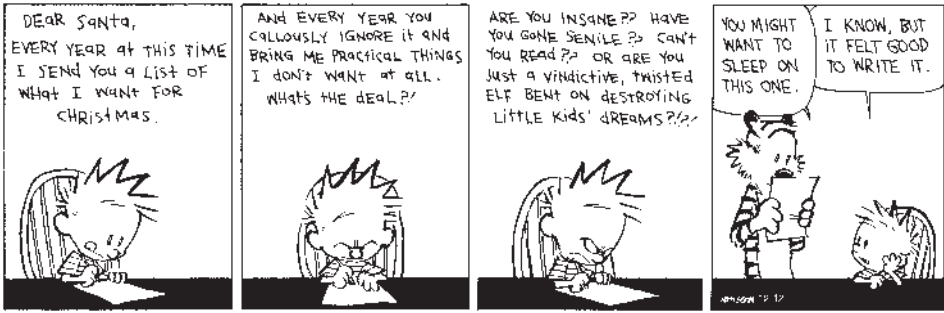
If the freeloader agrees to go, leaving his "collections" behind, you may be able to sell or donate the items. Should he refuse to leave your home, you may have to formally evict him which, depending upon the laws in your state, could be complicated without legal guidance.

To receive a collection of Abby's most memorable – and most frequently requested – poems and essays, send your name and mailing address, plus check or money order for \$8 (U.S. funds) to: Dear Abby – Keepers Booklet, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. (Shipping and handling are included in the price.)

Pastimes

Calvin and Hobbes

By Bill Waterson



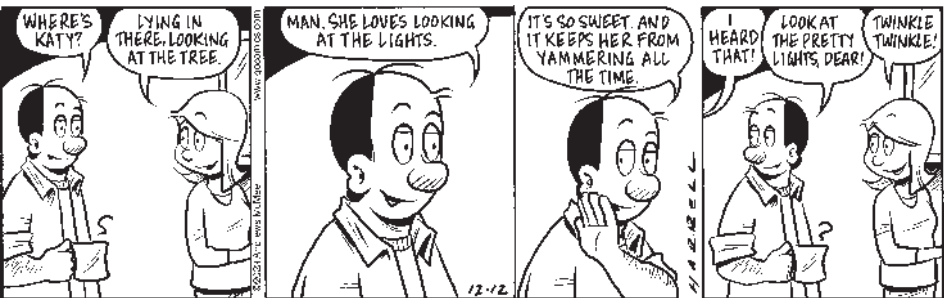
Garfield®

By Jim Davis



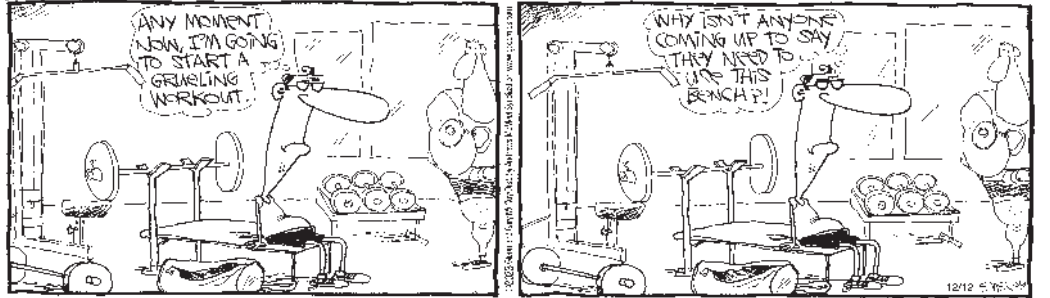
Adam@home

By Bryan Basset



The Duplex

By Glenn McCoy



CROSSWORD

By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS

- 1 Treaty
- 5 Showbiz job
- 8 Stinging insect
- 12 Approximately
- 13 Notre Dame coach
- 14 Evoking an "Ugh!"
- 15 Aspen headwear
- 17 Hide-away
- 18 "Blue Bloods" extra
- 19 Using the Internet
- 21 Sum
- 24 Lost traction
- 25 "Cat on a Tin Roof"
- 26 Cozy spot in Sun Valley
- 30 Mafia boss
- 31 Song-writer Jule
- 32 Bagel variety
- 33 Vail feature
- 35 Knitting stitch

DOWN

- 1 Not neg.
- 2 Biblical boat
- 3 CBS forensic drama
- 4 Male feline
- 5 React in horror
- 6 Annoy
- 7 Tank filler
- 8 "You can count on me!"
- 9 "Super-food" berry
- 10 Epidermis
- 11 Combustible heap
- 16 Gmail alternative
- 20 Egyptian river
- 21 Tiny amounts
- 22 "Hmm, I guess so"
- 23 Collette of "The Staircase"
- 24 Video chat format
- 26 Buys by the case
- 27 Pharmaceutical
- 28 Greek deli order
- 29 Morays
- 31 Cabbage salad
- 34 Like "phat"
- 35 Asian temple
- 37 Freedom for short
- 38 NYC gallery
- 39 Actress Lena
- 40 Royal flush, e.g.
- 41 Laugh-a-minute
- 44 Sch. near Topeka
- 45 Tic-tac-toe loser
- 46 Calendar abbr.
- 47 Soon-to-be grads

Solution time: 22 mins.

Yesterday's answer 12-12

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12				13				14		
15				16				17		
			18				19	20		
21	22	23				24				
25				26				27	28	29
30				31				32		
33			34					35		
			36				37			
38	39	40					41			
42				43	44			45	46	47
48				49				50		
51				52				53		

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY: Mayim Bialik, 48; Madchen Amick, 53; Regina Hall, 53; Jennifer Connelly, 53.

Happy Birthday: Stick to the truth and get the facts. Go through ups and downs using your high energy, creativity, strength and courage to ensure you get things done and reap the rewards. It's up to you to keep tabs on every aspect of your life if you plan to reach your destination and feel good about how things unfold. Showing gratitude will enrich your life. Your numbers are 6, 13, 22, 28, 39, 45, 47.

ARIES (March 21-April 19): An open mind will help you decide what's feasible and how best to use your energy to reach your goal. Discuss your plans with anyone who will be affected by your decisions. Positive relationships will give you the strength to manifest your dreams. ★★★★★

TAURUS (April 20-May 20): Don't let anyone talk you into donating something you can't afford to lose. Showing generosity can be uplifting, but not if you end up suffering. Think issues through instead of letting temptation and spontaneity lead to disappointment and loss. You'll prosper from a learning experience. ★★★

GEMINI (May 21-June 20): Carry on, but don't be fooled by what others do or say. Someone will mislead you if it benefits them. Stick to what works best for you, and don't stop until you are happy with what you achieve. You'll do your best if you work alone. ★★★

CANCER (June 21-July 22): Speak up and ask questions, then change what's necessary based on what you discover. A partnership will require you to set boundaries or rules to stop infringements that can lead to difficulties. Understanding and trust are mandatory to avoid a communication breakdown. ★★★

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22): Participate in something that requires energy, skills or connections that can help you get ahead. A challenge will prompt you to redefine what you want to do next. Don't let the changes others make mislead or cause stress or tension. ★★★★★

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22): Learn from an experience you have, and change what is no longer working for you. Set high standards and put your plan in place. Use your insight and discipline to gain alliances that have something to contribute to your cause or concern. ★★

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22): Observe who is doing what, and align yourself with those you feel you have the most in common with. You'll achieve more if you avoid arguing over trivial matters that don't concern you. Know where you fit in, and you'll reach your expectations. ★★★★★

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21): Make suggestions, spin things in your favor and get on with your day. Opportunities come to those willing to go with the flow and turn negatives into positives. Think outside the box and see what happens. Do more prep work and spend less money. ★★★

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21): Listen carefully and define your response to protect your space and plans. A joint effort will make your life easier and lower your expenses. Look into any information you think could be misleading before you move forward. ★★★

EUGENIA LAST

THE LAST WORD IN ASTROLOGY

COPYRIGHT 2007
UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE



CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19): Broaden your outlook, check investments or implement updates that lower your overhead. A positive change at home will give rise to new beginnings. A commitment seems promising, and love and romance are favored. ★★★

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18): If you put in the time, you'll gain access to a work-related opportunity. Get what you want in writing. Do what you can to ease stress and avoid temptation. Attending a festive networking event will require restraint and test your moral compass. ★★★★★

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20): No one is perfect. Don't believe everything you hear or get swept up by the hype someone has to offer. Look inward, pay attention to how you look and feel, and take care of your physical, mental and financial future. Discipline will pay off. ★★

Birthday Baby: You are sensitive, helpful and enthusiastic. You are imaginative and accepting.

★: Avoid conflicts; work behind the scenes. ★★: You can accomplish, but don't rely on others. ★★★: Focus and you'll reach your goals. ★★★★★: Aim high; start new projects. ★★★★★★: Nothing can stop you; go for gold.

SUDOKU

Conceptis Sudoku

By Dave Green

								2	8	
8		5		9	2	1				
	4	3		8	6	9			5	
7	3			1		8			6	
				3	7	9		1	2	
		1		6	8					
4	5		9						1	
9				4				5	3	
	7		6	5						

Difficulty: ★★

12/12

Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Saturday.

Yesterday's Answer

9	6	2	8	4	7	5	3	1
7	3	8	1	6	5	2	9	4
1	4	5	3	9	2	7	6	8
6	5	9	7	8	3	4	1	2
2	7	1	4	5	6	3	8	9
3	8	4	2	1	9	6	5	7
4	9	6	5	2	8	1	7	3
5	1	7	9	3	4	8	2	6
8	2	3	6	7	1	9	4	5

Difficulty: ★

12/11

WONDERWORD

By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally and even backward. Find them, circle each letter of the word and strike it off the list. The leftover letters spell the WONDERWORD.

MAKING A GINGERBREAD HOUSE

Solution: 4 letters

C	C	A	B	I	N	I	P	G	N	I	L	L	O	R
S	H	O	M	E	M	A	D	E	P	A	H	S	O	U
N	O	O	E	T	A	R	O	C	E	D	U	V	R	S
O	L	B	C	F	L	O	U	R	S	G	E	E	L	T
W	I	E	D	O	O	R	G	N	A	N	C	L	R	I
M	D	A	G	R	L	I	H	R	O	I	A	A	E	C
A	A	U	R	A	F	A	V	I	P	W	Y	L	O	S
N	Y	T	E	T	W	A	T	E	D	T	B	E	E	A
O	S	I	T	S	N	I	L	E	S	I	O	S	R	M
M	A	F	E	I	T	B	S	A	D	A	W	N	U	T
A	N	U	L	E	M	I	T	E	K	A	B	A	T	S
N	T	L	P	E	G	U	M	D	R	O	P	H	X	I
N	A	M	S	N	O	I	T	I	D	A	R	T	I	R
I	O	S	W	O	L	L	A	M	H	S	R	A	M	H
C	A	N	D	Y	C	A	N	E	G	A	T	T	O	C

©2023 Andrews McNeil Syndication www.wonderword.com

12/12

Assemble, Bake, Base, Beautiful, Bow, Cabin, Candy Cane, Chocolate, Christmas, Cinnamon, Competition, Cottage, Decorate, Design, Door, Dough, Edible, Flour, Gift, Gretel, Gundrop, Hansel, Holidays, Homemade, Marshmallows, Mixture, Oven, Recipe, Rolling Pin, Rustic, Santa, Shape, Snowman, Star, Sugar, Tasty, Tradition, Tray, Vanilla, Walls
Yesterday's Answer: Mushrooms
To purchase THE COLLECTED WONDERWORD, Volumes 66 through 76, order on line at www.WonderWordBooks.com. In Canada, call 1-855-232-2367.

STUMPED?

For answers to today's crossword, call 1-900-226-5955! 99¢ per minute, touch-tone/rotary phones. (18+ only.) A King Features service, NYC.

Cowboys pull even with Eagles in NFC East, win 33-13



ARLINGTON, Texas (AP)—Dak Prescott threw for two touchdowns, Brandon Aubrey made four field goals to start his career a record 30-for-30, and the Dallas Cowboys pulled even in the NFC East with their 15th consecutive home victory, 33-13 over the Philadelphia Eagles on Sunday night.

The Cowboys (10-3) weren't deterred by Jalen Carter's 42-yard fumble return for a touchdown, winning their fifth consecutive game since a loss at Philadelphia that gave the Eagles a two-game division lead.

The Eagles (10-3) lost three fumbles and didn't score an offensive touchdown as quarterback Jalen Hurts, who had the first fumble, lost consecutive games for the first time since October 2021.

While the Cowboys currently hold the tiebreaker, the Eagles would take the division title if they win their remaining four games.

Prescott had a career-best seventh consecutive game with at least two TD passes. Aubrey connected from 60, 59, 45 and 50 yards, becoming the first to make two kicks of 59 yards or more in a game.

Prescott was 24 of 39 for 271 yards, and the Cowboys limited Hurts to 197 yards passing and 30 rushing.

RAVENS 37, RAMS 31, OT

BALTIMORE (AP)—Tylan Wallace returned a punt 76 yards for a touchdown in overtime, and Baltimore snapped Los Angeles' three-game winning streak.

Wallace, who committed a crucial penalty on special teams earlier in the game that led to points for the Rams (6-7), eluded a couple of tackles after fielding the punt and stayed on his feet when Shaun Jolly made a diving attempt at him along the left sideline.

The Ravens (10-3) remained atop the AFC, a half-game ahead of Miami, which hosts Tennessee on Monday night.

Lamar Jackson and Matthew Stafford threw three touchdown passes apiece, overcoming wet conditions and dropped passes in a game that was high-scoring yet sloppy. Each offense went three-and-out in overtime before the final Los Angeles punt.

Jackson's 21-yard touchdown strike to Zay Flowers with 1:16 remaining—and his 2-point conversion pass to Flowers—put Baltimore up 31-28. Stafford then guided the Rams into position to take multiple shots to the end zone, and when that failed, Lucas Havrisik made a 36-yard field goal with 7 seconds left to force OT.



Dallas Cowboys kicker Brandon Aubrey (17) reacts with holder Bryan Anger (5) after kicking a field goal against the Philadelphia Eagles during the second half of an NFL football game, Sunday, Dec. 10, 2023, in Arlington, Texas.

Jackson threw for 314 yards with an interception, while Stafford threw for 294 yards without a turnover.

VIKINGS 3, RAIDERS 0

LAS VEGAS (AP)—Minnesota and Las Vegas played the lowest-scoring NFL game in 16 years, with Greg Joseph's 36-yard field goal with 1:57 left giving the Vikings the victory.

It was the first 3-0 game since Pittsburgh beat Miami on Nov. 26, 2007, the third in the past 40 years and the seventh in the Super Bowl era.

Joseph's kick ensured the game wouldn't end regulation scoreless for the first time since the New York Giants played the host Detroit Lions to a 0-0 tie on Nov. 7, 1943.

The Vikings (7-6) had just 230 total yards, and the Raiders (5-8)—losers of three in a row—were limited to 201 yards and nine first downs. Minnesota beat an AFC West opponent for the first time this season after going 0-3.

Nick Mullens relieved a struggling Joshua Dobbs at quarterback and led the Vikings on their lone scoring drive. His 22-yard completion to Jordan Addison to the Raiders 20 set up Joseph's kick.

Ivan Pace intercepted Raiders quarterback Aidan O'Connell on the next drive.

BILLS 20, CHIEFS 17

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (AP)—Josh Allen threw for 233 yards with touchdowns running and throwing, and Buffalo held on to beat Kansas City thanks in part to a crucial penalty on Chiefs wide receiver Kadarius Toney.

Tyler Bass kicked a go-ahead, 39-yard field goal with 1:54 left for the Bills (7-6).

Moments later, the Chiefs (8-5) thought they had taken the lead when Patrick Mahomes hit Travis Kelce over the middle, and the high school QB threw

far across the field to Toney, who ran the rest of the 49 yards for a touchdown. But the play was wiped out because Toney had lined up offside.

The Chiefs still had time to get in range for a tying field goal, but Mahomes threw three straight incompletions. Kansas City has lost four of six.

James Cook had 58 yards rushing and caught five passes for 83 yards and a score for Buffalo, which improved to 3-6 in games decided by six points or fewer.

Mahomes finished with 271 yards passing and a touchdown with an interception.

BRONCOS 24, CHARGERS 7

INGLEWOOD, Calif. (AP)—Russell Wilson threw two touchdown passes and Denver beat Los Angeles, which lost quarterback Justin Herbert to a broken finger on his right hand.

Wilson completed 21 of 33 passes for 224 yards, including a 46-yard touchdown to Courtland Sutton in the third quarter for the Broncos (7-6), who have won six of seven.

Herbert has a fracture in his right index finger, coach Brandon Staley said. He was 9 of 17 for 96 yards with an interception before being injured in the second quarter, apparently while he was taken down awkwardly by Denver's Zach Allen after throwing a pass.

Easton Stick completed 13 of 24 passes for 179 yards in Herbert's place. The Chargers (5-8) have dropped four of five.

Denver's defense had six sacks and forced a pair of turnovers.

BROWNS 31, JAGUARS 27

CLEVELAND (AP)—Joe Flacco threw for 311 yards and three touchdowns in his home debut for Cleveland, which survived a late

rally by Jacksonville.

The 38-year-old Flacco, who was signed three weeks ago by the Browns (8-5), went 26 of 45 and improved to 10-2 as a starter in Cleveland. His previous wins came while playing for Baltimore and the New York Jets.

Trevor Lawrence for the Jaguars (8-5) played despite spraining his right ankle in Monday night's loss to Cincinnati. He finished 28 of 50 for 256 yards and threw a season-high three interceptions.

Lawrence's third TD pass—to Evan Engram with 1:33 left—pulled the Jaguars within four points. Myles Garrett then sacked Lawrence on the 2-point conversion, and the Browns recovered an onside kick.

Flacco threw two TD passes in the first half to tight end David Njoku and completed a 41-yarder to David Bell in the fourth quarter when the Jaguars gambled with an all-out blitz on fourth down.

49ERS 28, SEAHAWKS 16

SANTA CLARA, Calif. (AP)—Deebo Samuel scored on a catch and a run and San Francisco beat Seattle for its 11th straight win over an NFC West opponent.

Samuel had his second straight game with multiple touchdowns to lead the 49ers (10-3) to the brink of winning back-to-back division titles for the first time since 2011-12. The Niners lead the Seahawks (6-7) and Rams by four games with four to play.

Seattle has lost four straight games for the first time in 14 seasons under Pete Carroll and has lost five in a row to the 49ers for the first time.

Brock Purdy finished 19 for 27 for a career-high 368 yards with two TDs and one interception, becoming the fourth player to complete at least 70% of his passes in seven straight games.

Christian McCaffrey finished with 153 yards from scrimmage, Samuel had 150 and Brandon Aiyuk 126 — marking just the third time in Niners history that three players had at least 125 yards in a game.

The Seahawks' Drew Lock threw two TD passes in place of an injured Geno Smith.

JETS 30, TEXANS 6

EAST RUTHERFORD, N.J. (AP)—Zach Wilson threw a pair of second-half touchdown passes in his return from a two-game benching as New York beat Houston to stop a five-game skid.

The Jets shut down the Texans' C.J. Stroud before the star rookie quarterback left late with a concussion.

Wilson was 27 of 36 for 301 yards—his third career game of 300 or more yards in easily his best performance of the season.

Breece Hall and Randall Cobb caught touchdown passes and Xavier Gipson ran for a score for the Jets (5-8), who reached 30 points for just the second time this season.

Stroud left with 6:30 remaining after a hit by Quinnen Williams. Davis Mills replaced him.

BEARS 28, LIONS 13

CHICAGO (AP)—Justin Fields threw for a touchdown and ran for another, and Chicago beat NFC North-lead-ing Detroit.

Receiver DJ Moore had his first career rushing touchdown and caught a scoring pass to help the Bears (5-8) win for the third time in four games.

The Bears scored 15 points in a span of about seven minutes to break open a game that was tied at 13-all late in the third quarter. They got the payoff they were seeking after giving up 17 points over the final 2:59 in a loss at Detroit three weeks earlier.

Detroit's Jared Goff threw two interceptions, lost a fumbled snap and was sacked four times. The Lions (9-4) have lost two of three.

bled snap and was sacked four times. The Lions (9-4) have lost two of three.

BUCCANEERS 29, FALCONS 25

ATLANTA (AP)—Baker Mayfield threw an 11-yard touchdown pass to Cade Otton with 31 seconds remaining, and Tampa Bay beat Atlanta to move into a three-way tie for first place in the NFC South.

The Buccaneers (6-7) sit atop the division alongside the Falcons and the New Orleans Saints.

Atlanta (6-7) rallied for a 25-22 lead with a pair of TDs in the final period, including quarterback Desmond Ridder's 6-yard scoring run with 3:23 remaining.

But Mayfield, who passed for just 144 yards, guided a 12-play, 75-yard scoring drive. The biggest play was a 32-yard completion to Chris Godwin.

BENGALS 34, COLTS 14

CINCINNATI (AP)—Jake Browning threw two touchdown passes and ran for a score in his second straight outstanding performance as Cincinnati pounded Indianapolis.

With Joe Burrow out for the season because of a wrist injury, Browning has kept the Bengals (7-6) in playoff contention. He followed up a 354-yard outing in a win at Jacksonville last Monday night by completing 18 of 24 passes for 275 yards with an interception.

Indianapolis (7-6) had its four-game win streak snapped and its playoff positioning took a hit. Gardner Minshew threw for 240 yards with a touchdown and an interception for the Colts, whose offense stalled after halftime.

SAINTS 28, PANTHERS 6

NEW ORLEANS (AP)—Derek Carr returned from a recent concussion and upper-body injuries to throw touchdown passes to Chris Olave and Jimmy Graham, and New Orleans beat NFL-worst Carolina.

Alvin Kamara ran 9 yards for a touchdown as the Saints (6-7) snapped a three-game skid and pulled into a first-place tie with Atlanta and Tampa Bay in the feeble NFC South.

The Panthers (1-12) have lost six straight for the second time this season.

Johnny Hekker's punt attempt in the second quarter was smothered by Saints linebacker Nephi Sewell. D'Marco Jackson scooped up the ball and returned it 8 yards for a touchdown that gave New Orleans a 14-3 lead.

Carr had just 37 yards passing through three-plus quarters. He finished 18 for 26 for 119 yards.

Dodgers gave Ohtani \$700M to hit and pitch, but also because he can sell



PHOENIX
(A P) —
Shohei

Ohtani's jaw-dropping \$700 million, 10-year deal with the Los Angeles Dodgers has some similarities to other contracts for the world's biggest sports stars, including soccer icons Lionel Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo, along with NFL quarterback Patrick Mahomes.

In terms of his marketability, experts point to another name.

The real comparison? Try Taylor Swift.

The global music sensation's broad appeal — one that bridges the gap between generations and expands to other countries — is an extremely rare phenomenon that Ohtani shares. There's no doubt the Dodgers hope they can leverage the Japanese star's arrival into even more money for a franchise that is already one of the most popular in Major League Baseball.

"He's rocketed into a stratosphere all his own," sports agent Leigh Steinberg said.

Ohtani was expected to sign the biggest deal in MLB history as a free agent this offseason and didn't disappoint. He's the sport's best two-way player ever—not even Babe Ruth hit and pitched at the same time so effectively—and though he won't be able to pitch in 2024 following Tommy John surgery,



A person reads an extra edition of the Yomiuri Shimbun newspaper reporting on Shohei Ohtani to move to the Los Angeles Dodgers Sunday, Dec. 10, 2023, in Tokyo.

he should provide plenty of value at the plate before he returns to the mound in 2025.

But the \$700 million price tag was more than most imagined.

His \$70 million average

salary is 62% above the previous high of about \$43.3 million, shared by pitchers Max Scherzer and Justin Verlander with deals they struck with the New York Mets. Ohtani's average salary nearly doubles

the roughly \$42.3 million he earned over six seasons with the Angels. It also exceeds the entire payrolls of Baltimore and Oakland this year.

The reason the Dodgers made that kind of commit-

ment is simple: It's probably worth it. Not just because he could help win World Series, but because of the value he brings even if he doesn't.

"If Ohtani is marketed right, he's a globally iconic player," said Mike Lewis, a professor of marketing at Emory University who specializes in sports business. "It could be like something from Formula One, where you've got the attention of the whole world. Baseball has sometimes struggled to gain national attention, but he's the kind of guy who attracts millions of eyeballs, and not just from the U.S."

The Dodgers haven't had trouble attracting eyeballs over the past several years. They're a perennially successful franchise—winning the NL West 10 of the past 11 seasons and the World Series in 2020—and averaged more than 47,000 fans per game last year, best in the sport. They've doled out big money to stars like Freddie Freeman, Mookie Betts and Clayton Kershaw.

But nothing compares to Ohtani.

Lewis—the Emory professor—said the spike in interest could be comparable to Major League Soccer's Inter Miami, which saw a massive jump in online interaction, particularly on Instagram, after Messi signed.

As of Sunday morning, the Dodgers' Instagram account had 3.2 million followers. Ohtani on his own has 6.3 million.

That's just the tip of the iceberg. The average fan under-

stands that Ohtani will generate revenue with more tickets, concessions and jerseys sold.

But no player drives more interest internationally, especially in Ohtani's native Japan, with a baseball-obsessed population of 126 million. Ohtani already has a deep group of sponsors targeting audiences on both sides of the Pacific Ocean, including New Balance, ASICS and Porsche Japan.

For the Dodgers, his international appeal means more companies in the U.S. and abroad are interested in advertising—Japanese companies frequently paid for prime ad spaces around Angel Stadium when Ohtani was in Anaheim. That alone brings a cascade of cash that could pay off a significant portion of Ohtani's deal.

For the creative folks in the advertising industry, the possibilities are almost endless.

That's where the Swift comparisons come into play.

Swift was a dominant force in 2023, partly because of "The Eras Tour" that sold out shows from coast to coast. But then she took it to the next level, developing a film of that tour that brought in millions of more fans to theaters throughout the country. Fans obsess over her every move on social media, including her budding romance with NFL star Travis Kelce.

Ohtani is potentially the same type of superstar. His free agency generated the sort of online sleuthing and hysteria usually associated with the Swifties, with fans frantically tracking private plane movements and alleged sightings trying to ascertain which of his suitors would land Ohtani. Like Swift, Ohtani also starred a documentary this year—his was produced by ESPN.

There's also the fact that among athletes, he's fairly low risk. He hasn't had a hint of controversy through his career, producing a squeaky clean image that any potential advertiser can get behind. In fact, fans know surprisingly little about his personal life—something that only seems to add intrigue.

Steinberg—the retired agent—said that he's certain every MLB team interested in Ohtani did a revenue forecast to estimate the amount of money Ohtani would generate, even before he touches the field. If the Dodgers were willing to pay \$700 million to land him, he's confident they did their homework.

Monster homers. Potential dominance on the mound. It's a Hollywood script that the Dodgers are hoping comes true.

"He's handsome and he's a huge box office draw," Steinberg said. "There are very few players who can match that. He has appeal to all."

'Thankful' Bronny James makes college debut in loss for USC nearly 5 months after cardiac arrest



LOS ANGELES (AP)—Bronny James showed off his defensive

skills in his college debut for Southern California nearly five months after he suffered cardiac arrest and expressed gratitude for the doctors and family who supported him.

He had four points, three rebounds and two assists on Sunday, coming off the bench to play in front of his superstar father LeBron James.

"I just want to say I'm thankful for everything," Bronny James said afterward in brief comments to a horde of media. He thanked the Mayo Clinic, where he received treatment, as well as his parents, siblings, coach Andy Enfield and his teammates "during this hard time in my life."

He left without taking any questions.

The Trojans lost in overtime to Long Beach State, 84-79. James walked off with his deflated teammates and didn't greet his father who sat courtside.

James logged 16 minutes, including starting the five-min-

ute extra session, but he wasn't a factor then before coming out for the last time. He was 1 of 3 shooting, hitting a 3-pointer in the second half.

His biggest impression came on defense. All of James' rebounds were on the defensive glass and he had two steals.

"I thought Bronny played well," Enfield said. "He defended at a high level. He guarded the quick ballhandlers on the other team pretty well."

James was quick to pass to his teammates, even when it appeared he could have taken a shot.

Enfield said James' minutes would continue to be monitored by USC's medical staff.

He played six minutes in the first half, when the Trojans led 45-30 at the break. In his second three-minute stint, James made a huge block on Jadon Jones, who was streaking to the basket on a fastbreak, riling up the fans.

James assisted on a dunk by Vincent Iwuchukwu, who also suffered cardiac arrest as a freshman. He returned to play 14 games last season.

"It's great to see Bronny out there. He's put a lot of work in the gym," Iwuchukwu said.

"We talked before the game and I told him to go out there and have fun."

James entered the game for the first time about seven minutes in, with some in the crowd standing and cheering. He missed his first shot, a 3-point attempt. Moments before, he tipped the ball away from a Long Beach State player, but the visitors got it back. The possession ended in a shot-clock violation for the Beach. James also snagged a rebound.

"He makes the right play all the time," said Boogie Ellis, USC's top guard. "Everybody wants a guy like that on their team. He defends well at a high level."

LeBron James arrived seconds before the national anthem, holding hands with 9-year-old daughter, Zhuri, and tapped his son's rear as he passed the Trojans who were lined up across the court for the anthem.

The younger James' debut capped a big weekend for the family. LeBron helped the Lakers win the NBA's new In-Season Tournament on Saturday night in Las Vegas, earning everyone on the team a \$500,000 per person payday.

"It was exciting for everybody to see him out there," Enfield said, "and I'm sure his family was the most excited."

The NBA was well-represented in the game. One of James' teammates is DJ Rodman, the son of Dennis Rodman, who fouled out. The Beach's roster includes Chayce Polynice, the son of 15-year NBA veteran Olden Polynice.

James joined his teammates for on-court warmups 90 minutes before tipoff. Wearing a white USC shirt and red sweatpants, he took a variety of jumpers under the watchful lenses of a baseline full of photographers.

Students lined up around one side of Galen Center and down an adjacent street waiting to get inside. Although there were pockets of empty seats in the 10,258-seat arena, James' debut helped the Trojans draw their largest crowd of 9,806 this season.

James suffered cardiac arrest on July 20 during a workout at Galen Center. He was found to have a congenital heart defect that was treatable.

James was recently cleared by his doctors and USC's medical staff to participate in full-contact practice. Previously, he had been limited to working out on his own doing weights, cardio and shooting.

Rota Marathon on Jan. 13 just keeps giving



Participants in the first-ever Rota Marathon

slated for Jan. 13, 2024, are in line to receive even more than a great race.

Event organizer Marianas Visitors Authority has extended the early bird registration deadline to Christmas Day, Dec. 25, continuing to offer the price of \$30 for the full and half marathon courses and \$10 for the 5K. Cash prizes for the Overall Top 3 finishers, male and female, have also been increased for the full and half marathon. In the full marathon, prizes have been raised to \$500 for first place, \$400 for second place, and \$300 for third place. In the half marathon, prizes are \$400 for first place, \$300 for second place, and \$200 for third place. In the 5K, prizes are \$300 for first place, \$200 for second place,



JUNJI TAKASAGO

Award-winning Teteto Beach on Rota awaits participants in the Rota Marathon 2024 on Jan. 13, 2024. The race, organized by the Marianas Visitors Authority, will feature full marathon, half marathon, and 5K courses.

and \$100 for third place. Group rates for more than 10 runners are also being offered.

"We're pulling out all the stops to make our first Rota Marathon a success, and we encourage everyone to join us in doing so. Come on out and enjoy a great weekend in

beautiful Rota!" said MVA managing director Christopher A. Concepcion.

Event sponsors include Valentino Hotel. The local community is stepping up with classic Rota hospitality to make the race a memorable one for visitors to The Friendly Island. Rolling out

the welcome mat for runners are Rota Mayor Aubrey Hocog, who has pledged the support of the municipal government to assist the MVA in staging the event. Rota's four members of the Northern Marianas Commonwealth Legislature have also signed on to cheer on

runners and man aid stations along the route: Senate vice president Donald Manglona (Ind-Rota), Sen. Paul Manglona (Ind-Rota), Sen. Dennis Mendiola (R-Rota), and Rep. Julie Ogo (Ind-Rota).

Rota is 30 minutes from the capital island of Saipan via light aircraft. Concepcion said the MVA has also reached out to Star Marianas to request the addition of extra flights. The airline also offers charter flights.

The race falls on the weekend of Martin Luther King Jr. Day, a federal holiday. Beginning Dec. 26, 2023, registration rates will be \$40 for the full marathon and \$20 for the 5K. Full marathon participants must be 18 years of

age or older. Registration forms are available on The Marianas Calendar at www.mymarianas.com/the-marianas-calendar and may be submitted in-person or via email to the MVA offices on Saipan or Rota.

The last day to register is Jan. 12, 2024. Mandatory race packet pickup will be on Jan. 12 from 5pm to 6pm at Rota Round House in Songsong village. On Jan. 13, the full marathon and half marathon will begin at 4am, and the 5K will begin at 6am.

The road race will begin at Rota Round House and traverse scenic and historic sites on the island. Registration includes a limited edition official Rota Marathon T-shirt, Rota Marathon medal, and one entry to the awards banquet to be held at 6pm on race day. Registration may be submitted in person at the MVA office in Saipan at 3366 Beach Road, Suite 101, Garapan or at the MVA field office in Songsong, Rota.

For more information, contact MVA Community Projects specialist Ed Diaz at ediaz@mymarianas.com or 664-3200 or MVA Rota field operations supervisor Dave Atalig at datalig@mymarianas.com or 532-0327, or visit www.mymarianas.com. (MVA)

PHAIR

From page 20

was third with a time of 2:05:40.

Phair, a PHI Pharmacy pharmacist, said his overall win came as a big surprise. "I was expecting a Top 5-10 finish based on my expected time, but never expected to win. There are definitely several faster runners on Saipan. Lucky for me they had other plans on race day."

The 44-year-old said that he runs fairly regularly but races only occasionally. "Usually, it's my wife that will sign me up for things when she thinks the prizes are cool. The half marathon was a good tune up for where I'm at in my training so the timing was right to jump in. Bigger goals include a few marathons next year and to 'run the year,' (2024 miles) throughout the calendar come January."

As to if he was in the lead through the race, he said he moved up in the first quarter mile and extended it throughout. He added, "The early start and rainy weather were very welcome. Even the hills were okay because it was still dark when I ran up them. Somehow not seeing the climbs as a whole makes it easier to just put the next foot in front of the other and get through it."

He then gave thanks to Run Saipan, the Department of Public Safety, and the many volunteers that made the race possible. "For a small place it's really great to have a group that provides such a full and diverse race schedule throughout the year," said Phair.

For Chisato's part, she also said that she was surprised to be the first woman to complete the race. She said of her preparation for the half marathon, "I always train before the race so

I was prepared. I made sure I slept early and hydrated. I got up [at] 4:30 in the morning 4-5 times a day for my training. And I am very happy that this is the fruit of my labor."

She added, "The course was difficult but it was fun at the same time. I just made sure to have fun while running. I would like to thank my family and friends for their support and [for] inspiring me."

The age division awardees for the half marathon in the 19-34 men's age group were Aaron Pamintuan at 1:58:52; Simon Necesito at 2:08:07; and Kurt Songsong with a time of 2:33:59.

The women's age group Top 3 were Amber Estupinian at 2:20:00; Jean Bracken who clocked in at 2:27:23; and Jove Taman at 2:44:14.

Adam Walsh, who clocked in at 2:02:15, was the lone runner in the 35-39 age group, while Chad Taflinger at 1:58:49 was the lone participant in the men's 40-44 age group.

Top 3 in the women's 40-44 age group were Angela Taflinger with a time of 2:08:35; Kathleen Tolentino at 2:12:34; and Shiela Mabutas at 2:23:50.

In the men's 45-49 age group, Jovy Chavez was the only runner and came in at 2:43:59, while Mei Hun Jin was the lone runner in the women's 45-49 with a time of 2:44:20.

Top 3 in the men's 50-54 age group were Matthew Furan at 2:02:33; James Abuy at 2:16:54; and Raymund Tolentino at 2:18:04. The women's 50-54 age group had two runners with Marilou Carlos coming in first at 2:26:23; second was Rebecca Wiggins at 2:34:01.

Kim Church was the lone runner in the 55-59 age group with a time of 2:44:56.

In the 60+ age group, Top

3 were Chong Nam Lee at 2:05:13; Changwan Jang with a time of 2:08:46; and Tom Austin who clocked in at 2:46:40.

A lunch banquet was held after the race where the Top 3 medals of the overall and age categories were awarded along with additional raffle prizes including the grand prize of \$500.

Run Saipan president Edward Dela Cruz Jr. thanked the race's title sponsor, Atkins Kroll for sponsoring for the second year in a row.

"I hope that it will become a third consecutive year in a row in 2024. Thank you to Hong Ye Construction for sponsoring the ETC prize of \$1,500. The lucky school with [the] most participation this year was Saipan International School," said Dela Cruz.

Dela Cruz then thanked on behalf of Run Saipan board and running community, the following organizations for the success

of the event: Northern Marianas Athletics, Crowne Plaza Resort Saipan, Hyatt Regency Saipan, Aqua Resort Club, Saipan Paddling Club, Northern Marianas College, Marianas Visitors Authority, Napu Brewing Company, Tapped Out, MARPAC, Gold's Gym Saipan, Latte Built 24, Coalition of Private Schools Association, Saipan International School, Division of Fire Emergency Medical Services; the volunteer core made up of NMA, Run Saipan, Atkins Kroll, Marianas High School NHS, and MHS Run Club.

He then gave a special thank you to the Department of Public Safety. "Thank you Commissioner Clement Bermudes and your outstanding officers for providing safety and security for our runners, pedestrians and motorists alike," he said.

Results of the AK 5K Fun Run will be posted in the next issues of *Saipan Tribune*.



LEIGH GASES

Top 3 overall in the men's division, from second right, bronze medalist Landen Taflinger and silver medalist Simon Tang (not present was gold medalist Joel Phair) are joined by Run Saipan president Edward Dela Cruz Jr., far right, and Dr. Ron Snyder, far left, during the awards ceremony at the Run Saipan banquet in Crowne Plaza last Saturday.

BLUE

From page 20

When they faced off against the Pirates, however, the Blue Jays could not get past their pitchers Bill Camacho and Pete Sablan.

Three runs came in the first inning for the Blue Jays, but the Pirates scored four. The Pirates continued to stack on their lead as they scored five more by the fourth inning for a 9-4 lead.

The Blue Jays could only score three in the last inning from runs by Julian Salalila, Takai, and Jun Salalila. The Pirates' offense on the other hand,

went full force and scored eight runs thanks to Ben Tagabuel, D. Flores, Sablan, Audie Maratita, Jerome Delos Santos, Eric Palacios, Jess Tenorio, and Mario Aguon.

In other results last Dec. 5, the Reds defeated the Marlins, 14-13; and the Dodgers pummeled the Spartans, 28-9, last Dec. 7.

The Masters league started last Nov. 20, with six teams—the Blue Jays, Spartans, Pirates, Reds, Marlins, and Dodgers vying for the championship title. The league is scheduled through February 2024, with the championship series slated for Feb. 19, Feb. 21, and Feb. 23.

TSUKAGOSHI

From page 20

Pangelinan played through sickness and said she and mixed doubles partner Guerrero didn't think too much of it and just played.

The 24-year-old said, "Being sick was hard actually, not only as a player, but as well as facilitating the tournament."

For 13-year-old Tsukagoshi, she said the tournament was "short" but "super fun."

"It was a good experience for me to go against new people. This tournament was kind of a qualifier for the U17 national team that is going to Australia in February 2024, so I felt very

proud of myself and happy to show my talent and passion," she said.

On how she made it to the championships, she said, "My coaches helped and supported me through this tournament and it really helped me get to the top. I also really appreciate my best friends for supporting me in my games. Me and my partners' strategy was just to give no mercy and to work hard."

"I'm very thankful for this opportunity that was given to me and I'll be looking forward to the next tournament," said Tsukagoshi.

Results of the other divisions will be posted in the next issues of *Saipan Tribune*.



Cowboys pull even with Eagles in NFC East, win 33-13.

PAGE 17

Saipan Tribune Sports

Rota Marathon on Jan. 13 just keeps giving.

PAGE 19



20 TUESDAY, DECEMBER 12, 2023

SAIPAN TRIBUNE

Phair, Chisato top Half Marathon



AK SAIPAN

Overall winner of the 2023 Run Saipan Holiday Half Marathon Joel Phair is seen running the last few meters of the course from Hyatt Regency Saipan to the softball field in Marpi and back last Saturday morning.

By LEIGH GASES
leigh_gases@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

There were surprises and prizes galore as Joel Phair and Rosemarie Chisato braved the early morning rain and outran 33 other runners in their divisions to top the 2023 Run Saipan Holiday Half Marathon last Saturday.



Phair came in first overall with a time of 1:44:38 after running the length of the 13.1-mile course from the Hyatt Regency Club Elan parking lot to the Marpi softball field and back. Meanwhile, Chisato topped the women's divi-

sion with a time of 2:00:24.

High school students rounded off the men's overall division as silver went to Simon Tang at 1:52.44 and Landen Taflinger was bronze at 1:57:25.

Run Saipan veteran running sister An Bang came in second to fellow member Chisato at 2:03:48, while Jessica Ortizo

See PHAIR on Page 19



LEIGH GASES

Top 3 of the women's division in the 2023 Run Saipan Half Marathon, second from right, bronze medalist Jessica Ortizo, gold medalist Rosemarie Chisato, and silver medalist An Bang, are joined by Run Saipan president Edward Dela Cruz Jr., far right, and Dr. Ron Snyder, far left, during the awards ceremony at the Run Saipan banquet in Crowne Plaza last Saturday.

Tsukagoshi, Pangilinan bag badminton championships

By LEIGH GASES
leigh_gases@saipantribune.com
REPORTER



Rising star Lina Tsukagoshi and veteran Janelle Pangilinan smashed their way to multiple championships in the NMI National Badminton Championships 2023 that was held last over the weekend.

Tsukagoshi teamed up with Marlon Bautista in the U17 mixed doubles division and defeated second place Kyle Salcedo and Prapti Mondal in three sets, 21-9, 20-21, 21-20.

In the open division, Tsukagoshi and Pangilinan were a force to be reckoned with in

the women's doubles match-up against second place Shaina Malonso and Charmaine Bautista. Pangilinan and Tsukagoshi defeated them in two quick sets, 21-11, 21-11.

Pangilinan then wrapped up the tourney with a win in the open mixed doubles division with her trusty partner Nate Guerrero. They shut down second place Daniell Pablo and Malonso, 21-15, 21-11.

According to Pangilinan, the tournament was a qualifier for national badminton team international badminton events, so the focus was on the youth players and to gauge their progress from the beginning of the year.

See TSUKAGOSHI on Page 19



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Janelle Pangilinan, right, and Lina Tsukagoshi during their open division women's doubles match up in the NMI National Badminton Championships 2023 at the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium last weekend.

Blue Jays split two games in Master's League

By LEIGH GASES
leigh_gases@saipantribune.com
REPORTER



The Blue Jays split their last two games in the 2023 SBL Master's League last Dec. 6 and Nov. 30 at the Francisco "Tan Ko" Palacios Baseball Field.

They flew high against the Spartans on Nov. 30, 16-3, but came crashing back down to earth after they lost to the Pirates, 7-19, last Dec. 6.



LEIGH GASES

In this file photo, a Blue Jays pitcher winds for the pitch during a game in the 2023 SBL Master's League at the Francisco "Tan Ko" Palacios Baseball Field.

In their win against the Spartans, Ed Manibusan led the team by going three out of four at-bats, with one run,

one double, and two RBIs.

In the first inning alone, the Blue Jays brought in nine runs mostly off defensive er-

rors by the Spartans.

Alvin Takai scored twice, while Jun Salalila, Cris George, Jess Mesa, Paul Salalila, Manny Cabrera, Pepi Takano, and Mike Tomokane scored the seven other runs that inning.

Spartans pitcher Larry Norita couldn't stop the bleeding as the Blue Jays scored two more in the next inning for a 11-2 lead.

Only one more run would score for the Spartans from Ton Pangelinan, as Blue Jays pitcher George proceeded to shut them down in the last inning. The Blue Jays scored four in the third and one more in the fourth for an overwhelming 13-run deficit.

See BLUE on Page 19